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MUSICAL
STUDIES

AND



SILHOUETTES:

BY
CAMILLE BELLAIGVE

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MUSICAL STUDIES

AND

SILHOUETTES

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF CAMILLE BELLAIGUE

BY

ELLEN ORR



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SOCIOLOGY IN MUSIC.

To M. JEAN BRUNHES,
PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG.

SOCIOLOGY IN MUSIC.

GUYAU, a writer whose loss is deeply to be regretted, has left to us, under the title of : "Art from a Sociological Point of View," a work, admirable in its conception, but incomplete in its execution ; his great subject is here treated, only in part, and little else than literature is considered from the point of view suggested. The pages play false to some extent to their title, and the expectation of the reader is disappointed.

Thus we have been tempted to essay for music, what Guyau has accomplished for literature : to seek the sociological or the social in the nature, story and effects of the art of melody. Not the idea, only, but many of the elements of this study, we must borrow from the young master who is gone ; we shall follow him, along the paths, which he himself chose, hoping for nothing more than to verify in the particular sphere of music, the general principles which he has laid down.

I.

"The conception of the art of music, as of all other arts," writes Guyau, "must play a part, more and more important, in the coherency of the human race, and in that fellowship of men's consciences, that complete physical and mental sympathy, which tends towards the uniting of the individual life and the life collective. The supreme aim of art, as of morals, is to raise the individual out of himself, and to identify him with his race."

Such is our point of departure, and this, our theme to develop. As we set forth, this, at least, may be assumed as certain ;—that, as philosophy and science create a community of ideas, and morals, a community of the will, so art, like the religion, which it here so much resembles, establishes a communion of sentiment in human hearts ; and possesses, thus, a marvellous power of unifying and of socialising, as it were ; for nothing is so individual, so intrinsically our own, as the voice of the senses. Through them men differ, more than through the intelligence, and under their power it is, that each one of us finds himself most at variance with his fellow-man : nothing which we possess is so personal as our sensibilities and therefore so precious. What we feel is our own, and, yet, superior to ourselves ; "my love,"

Guyau has well said, "is more alive and a thing of truth, than am I myself." Upon the altar of their sensibilities men offer the greatest sacrifices of their lives,—lay even life itself; for it is of the senses,—I use the word in its highest acceptation,—no less than of the intelligence, that the heroic exaltation of the martyr is conceived; and the reasonings of great hearts are, for the most part, along paths to which the feet of reason are strange. He who dies for his faith, dies not so much, perhaps, for the dogmas or even the creed of that faith, as for the love which it enfolds.—But why talk of dying? Humanity lives and lives upon its highest plane, more through a community of sentiments than of ideas; most men would rather feel than think alike, for to know the same things is not enough, we must know,—and love. The solution of the social problem will be, not in the fraternity of minds, but of souls, and, if it should indeed prove, as has been prophesied, that science is dethroned, the crown will fall from her brow, because, though she drew all men to her knees by the sceptre of intelligence, she was powerless to knit together the hearts of any two of her subjects.

Thus art is the incomparable agent of sociology, or comparable only to religion, which lives, as does art, in the realm of the senses; and thus,

more perhaps, even, than truth, is beauty the begetter of unanimity, for the crowd is more easily captured by the awakening of its passions, than by the cultivating of its ideas ;— by emotion rather than by proof. What mathematical demonstration will excite in an assembly the enthusiasm, roused by the harmonies of a symphony, or even by the song of a single human voice ? Or what savan ever bowed to such applause as is showered upon a favourite tenor ? Science even borrows from art certain phrases, with which she loves to deck herself : the solution of the problem is “graceful,” and Guyau suggests to us as “beautiful,” the sight of “an intelligence following a path and proposing to itself an end, to arrive at which, it scatters all obstacles,” or the idea of “a human will, with which we sympathise, whose struggles and toils and triumphs we love” ; and, again, “in the impassioned intensity of its search, a train of reasoning, which leads to a discovered truth, is beautiful.”

Art is, therefore, a fact or a phenomenon essentially sociological because it is essentially a phenomenon or a fact of the senses. “That which is of the most importance,” an old and gentle friend of my childhood used to say, “is to lose sight of oneself.” In very truth, this is the great thing needful, the supreme article of the beauti-

ful, as of the moral ; — the beauty and the blessing, most Godlike, of genius, as of virtue ! The artist must lose sight of himself, or rather see himself, only as for others ; must consider himself as belonging to his fellows, and as having been created for, or, above all, as the creator of their profit and their pleasure. And so we verify the definition of art given by Guyau : "the development of society through the senses." So art becomes charity and, as the Divine law has willed that they should, the beautiful and the good are one in their mission. "Love God with all thy heart . . . Love thy neighbour as thyself," — no commandment is greater than these, and art, preaching to us the love rather than the knowledge of one another, establishes the great precept of the Spirit, — the supremacy of love.

II.

Of all the arts, music is the most sociological.

Sound is the great social factor : "the sympathetic and social instincts are at the bottom of all the pleasures of the ear, and the greatest charm of sound, to a human being, is that it is so essentially expressive, making him a sharer in the joys and, above all, in the sorrows of his fellow-creatures. . . . The sorrow of the voice moves us

more deeply, than that expressed in face or gesture."¹ Nature and art bear witness to this social value of sound, for, with a voice attuned to truer nicety than that of action or of light, it reveals and expresses existence. If the deaf are sadder, as a rule than the blind, it is because the sense of hearing is more necessary than that of sight, to the perception of the life about us. The desert lies, as though lifeless, beneath the burning kiss of the sun ; bearing the semblance of death, because so motionless, doubtless, but, above all, because it breathes in a very hush of silence, upon the threshold of "infinite space." It was under the spell of the silence, and not of the shadows, of this infinity that Pascal shuddered.

Or passing from the material to the æsthetic, we find no artifice so cunning as that of music to evoke the very semblance of life itself. No marble Orpheus can call up the tears that some melodious Orpheus can sing into our eyes, and beneath the ceiling of the Sistine chapel, or before the tomb of the Medici, Beethoven might even dare to say : "Behold, if this sorrow be equal to my sorrow." Or what joy, indeed, could ever equal his joy ?— Go listen to the Finale of the "Eroica," or of the symphony in C-minor,

¹ Guyau.

and ask yourself from which painting of Rubens, let it breathe forth never so exalted a triumph, does there well out such a flood of happiness?

Music owes this faculty of creating life and so arousing our sympathies, to its analogy to language. As has been justly said : " Music has gathered to herself all the true characters of the language of instinct, to the immeasurable accentuation and enrichment of this last."¹ And thus she is, and will ever remain, herself, a language, that of the senses and not of the intellect ; a natural tongue, neither manufactured nor conventional, more closely affiliated with the sentiments which it expresses, than the language of words and more adequate. Wagner has left us his thoughts, to which we cannot turn too often, upon the common origin of the two, and their ultimate separation ; upon the rights of music to live, and to become a language. " Issue, originally," he says, " of a signification of words, which was entirely natural, and personal,—the creation of the senses,—the written language of man developed in a direction, more and more abstract, till words became only conventional signs ; feeling lost all participation in the use of vocables, and the order and connection of these last fell into

¹ From the very interesting work of M. Jules Combier ; " Les Rapports de la musique et de la poésie.

an absolute dependence upon rules which must be, of necessity, acquired. In their parallel development, customs and language were alike subjected to conventions no longer intelligible to natural sentiments, and which could only be comprehended through reflection, which must receive them as inculcated maxims. While the modern languages of Europe, separated into their different branches, have followed on, with a more and more decided tendency to a purely conventional perfection, music, for its part, has developed into a power of expression, never before imagined. It is as though human sentiment, under the pressure of civilised conventionalities, had torn asunder its bonds, seeking an issue, which would permit it to follow the laws of its own language, and to express itself in a manner which is to it intelligible, with an entire liberty and complete independence of the logical laws of thought. . . . The modern development of music has responded to a deep need of humanity, and, notwithstanding the halting of its tongue in logic's ears, it speaks to the heart of man, with a victorious power of which that same logic has never dreamed."¹

Influencing, thus, sensibility, as it does, it is the affinities of the senses, which music ever establishes. Indeed let us make no other pretensions

¹ Quoted by M. Jules Combarieu, op. cit.

on her behalf, for, should we succeed in dragging her from her rightful domain, she would find some musician to lead her home. In response to the claim of a friend, that all things might find their expression through music, Grétry once said, "I would agree with you, if you could order by music, your dinner, in this restaurant, which we are about to enter." The author of "*Richard Cœur de Lion*" was right; music does not say all that there is to be said,—it has no speech for those of us, who would ask for bread.

But man does not live by bread alone, and the following anecdote is the welcome complement of that of Grétry. Beethoven, they say, once went to see a mother, who was mourning the death of her child. She advanced to meet him, but he turned from her to the piano without saying a word. For a long time he played and then rose silently and left the house. Music accomplished that day its highest mission to men, carrying, to a suffering heart, a sweeter sympathy and perhaps a deeper consolation than speech can ever know.

Not only between men, but between men and animals,—between, even animals themselves, music establishes mutualities, which, vague though they be, she alone can create. The animal recognises only the musical elements of language,—

the timbre, the intonation, the intensity of sound : it is the intonation, affectionate or severe, and not the sense of our words, which attracts or rebuffs them ; they obey the voice, not the speech. Brute beasts, indeed, are not insensible to musical instruments themselves : the serpent listens to, perhaps understands, the flute of the charmer, and the hearts of horse and warrior beat in unison, as the trumpet sounds the charge. The “Ranz des Vaches” is the best known, but not the only example of the sociological effect of music upon animals : when the bull in the arena obstinately refuses to fight, they send towards him other cattle, with bells about their necks, and the bell rather than the sight of his companions, the tinkling of the little bell, with the remembrance and the hope of the prairies in its voice, charms from out the inclosure, the animal who had shrunk instinctively from death. Or who doubts that music creates mysterious ties between the herdsman and his flock ? Interpreter of sympathies and of mutual tenderness, while neither flock nor, perhaps, shepherd are aware of her ministrations, she voices the humble life which they live together upon the bosom of a common mother. And thus she establishes kindly, almost fraternal relations between man and the lower creatures,—between the master and his servants :

she extends the reign of charity and love, and a kindred soul to that of the saintly Francis of Assisi, who went about redeeming lambs from butchery, and calling them his brothers, often pours forth in song, from the lips of some rough-handed shepherd.

It is through music that we communicate, or, best of all, commune with nature ; for nature is the great musician, and he who has eyes to see, but no ears to hear her beauties, is in danger of never really knowing her. If the echo is no longer the voice of the nymph, weeping for the beautiful youth whom she loved, but who loved none but himself,—it is still a voice : the voice of woods, rocks and waters and all those mighty forces, which, were they dumb, we should be forever strangers to, but whose friendship is our glad possession, from the moment of our first sympathy of intercourse. Yes, nature strikes the note of kinship with ourselves in her harmonies, as well as in her pageants, and ever lightens, if but for a moment, the obscurity of her soul, in response to our call :

“O flots, que vous savez de lugubres histoires.

* * * * *

Vous vous les racontez en montant les marées,

Et c'est ce qui vous fait ces voix désespérées

Que vous avez le soir quand vous venez vers nous.”

It needs not a poet to hear the sighing of the wind, or the laughter or weeping of the water-course and when Madame de Sévigné likened the nightingale to the “leaf that sings,” she well knew that, now and again, men must doubt whether the night song, which soothes them, is of the birds or of the leaves.

In a certain page of Bizet’s “*L’Arlésienne*” we may find an admirable example of the universal sympathy which music creates. — It is evening, along the border of one of the marshy ponds of Camargue; Frederic leans his head on the shoulder of Balthazar, — the old man and the child who have suffered and wept together. After a time they move slowly away, the stage is deserted and the breath of the orchestra alone sets the reeds by the water’s edge a trembling. Melancholy envelops the scene : all,— to those distant shepherds and their flocks,—the stagnant lake on the immense plain,—all shrink beneath a common sorrow, while sweet, sad chords of music create a sympathy of unrest and sorrow, between man and brute and nature herself.

Again and notably, the sociological nature of music is made apparent in the incontestable fact, that this is the most popular of the arts. Music for the people exists in every land the earth round, but we may search in vain for anything

akin to it in painting, sculpture or architecture ; it is the only art in which the impersonal genius and the anonymous soul of the crowd participates. And why ? Because, following a happy formula of Émile Hennequin : " the perception of the feelings is more commonly appealed to through the sense of hearing, than through that of sight." As a usual thing, indeed, the former faculty is the more acute.

" Qui sait ce qu'un enfant peut entendre et peut dire
Dans les soupirs divins nés de l'air qu'il respire ! "

And truth lies in De Musset's words ; nothing greater is needed oftentimes, than the sigh from the breast of a child, to create music which mother and angels will bend the ear to hear.

Music, too, is the only art susceptible of close association with the major part of the acts, individual and social, of our lives. Music follows us from birth to death ; she sings beside our cradle, she kneels before the door of our tomb ; in religion and in war she is ever present ; at the dance and at the banquet, at every solemnity and at every feast. Songs for the table and songs of repose are always in the air ; and from that almost elementary but most essential of all the social relations,—I mean that of love, music may never alienate herself. Far from startling lovers apart, she entrances them ; so well she under-

stands them, that, to her, they instinctively turn. "If music be the nourisher of love, then play on forever, give me more than I can bear. . . . Oh! It falls on my ear like the soft south wind, which breathes upon a bank of violets, discovering and begetting perfume." So sings the beautiful, enamoured prince in the "*Soir des Rois*."

But it is the way of the humble, that this art smoothes with kindliest touch; it was the cobbler and not the financier, who "sang from morning till night," and of all those who labour and suffer, music is the companion and consoler. She presides over and sweetens the rough working-days of common labourers and peasants, and the cultivation of the soil is accompanied by songs of ploughing and of seed-time, songs of harvesting and reaping, beautiful and free; "songs rising to the great winds of heaven." Oh, lovely choruses of spinning-girls, and of maidens washing their linen by the stream, songs of the mills and of the flails, beating the air, in rhythm to the dance of the golden grain, songs of the grape-gatherers treading out the purple juice,—of you, is born the supreme folk-music of the world,—that of primitive humanity and of its consecrated labour. And while your incense rises from the earth, other melodies akin to you, float upon the waters; for, like the

labourer at his plough, fishermen and gondoliers bend, singing, over their oars, till the very waves are melodious. From far across the seas, too, on distant shores, wild and well-nigh fabulous to us, thousands of voices rise before the mosques of Stamboul, or beneath the palms of the Nile ; for the souls of multitudes, in that mysterious Orient, break silence, in the songs of muezzin and of cameleer. There is often an unexpected likeness between these exotic chants and our own melodies : the notes of the biniou,—that quaint bag-pipe of Brittany,—of the flute of Cairo and of the Andelusian guitar strangely resemble one another. And yet this need not surprise us ; music is the great interpreter of international unanimity, and, while many systems of words, scarcely suffice, but one economy of sound is necessary to the translation of the elementary but world-wide emotions of humanity. The sonorous forms, thus created by universal genius, are taken possession of by the genius of the individual, appropriated and used as the foundation of its masterpieces.

However carefully we turn over the music leaves of the past, we meet everywhere the song of the people ; as a master of this subject has said : the popular song is the “ substratum upon which the successive layers of music have accumulated from

its earliest formations, to the present time."¹ Popular melodies are to be found everywhere in the chants of the Latin church, during the Middle Ages; are the only representatives, moreover, at that time, of poetry and of music, outside of the church. The gentle art of the Troubadours sprang from the songs of the people, and those songs, too, it was, which gave birth, a little later, to the vocal polyphony of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The great masters of counterpoint, Josquin des Prés, Orlando di Lasso and Palestrina built in popular motives, even intonations, as the very corner-stone of their architecture, and M. Tiersot assures us that, from the time of Dufay to that of Carissimi, the single theme of "L'Homme Armé," alone, inspired nineteen masses and two songs. Nor when, from polyphony, the art of music returned to monody, did the popular element become eliminated from the structure; and if, later, its power weakened in the French opera of the seventeenth century, it was again renewed in the Opéra-comique of the eighteenth.

But it is not only within the confines of France that folk-music has lived with an influence, which has made itself felt; Bach has treated the chorals

¹ *Histoire de la chanson populaire en France*, by M. Julien Tiersot; Plon, Nourrit and Co., and Heugel, Paris.

of the Lutheran liturgy in a thousand ways, all of them beautiful, and the choral is in close kinship with the song. Many of these canticles of the church sprang from nothing more sacred than the profane airs of the sixteenth century, which, changed in rhythm and accent, and modified by the association of pious words, have thus found their definite form. Haydn, chapel-master of Prince Esterhazy, and a resident of Eisenstadt, which was but a little way from the country of the Croatian tongue, has introduced into his works more than one melody of that land; one of them, but little modified, becoming the famous Austrian Hymn;¹ while popular Hungarian melodies figure in many a symphony of the master. Mozart in his "Magic Flute," and, more particularly, in the rôle of Papageno, was inspired by the street music of the Viennese, and Beethoven, in certain of his quartettes, has used Russian national themes. The influence of the "Ranz des Vaches" in the musical development of Rossini's "William Tell," is much greater than we might thoughtlessly suppose,² but no one is

¹ See an article on this subject, by Dr. H. Reimann, in the "Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung," of October 13, 1893.

² De la melodie populaire dans le "Guillaume Tell" de Rossini, by E. van der Straeten. See also chapter entitled: "La nature dans la musique" in the author's work on "Psychologie musicale."

ignorant of the part which Luther's "Ein feste Burg" plays, in the "Reformation Symphony" of Mendelssohn, or in Meyerbeer's "Les Huguenots." Weber and Schubert again, were the great musicians of the people, greater, even, in this regard, than Wagner himself: and, to-day, M. Grieg, master as he is, stands for music as the art of the people; while, in the Russian school, the utilising of national themes has remained, since the days of Glinka, one of its most fixed and fertile principles.

And so, down all the length of history, the paths of individual genius and of the genius of the multitude, have run side by side, often intersecting. The latter rendering up all which it possessed of simplicity, truth and purity; confiding its ill-defined thoughts, its vague passions, desires and dreams; unbosoming its humble joys and its hidden sorrows; while from these primitive but sacred materials, that other spirit of personal genius has composed its great definitive works of art: choosing and developing, ordering and organising; elevating instinct to conscience and fortifying sentiment with reason. In a word, rendering a hundredfold, for that which it has received; while in the meantime, by this constant communication, by this perpetual interchange of service and benefit, the sociological ideal has been

realised ; for thus, are the upper and the lower classes knit together, as the hearts of the great touch the greater heart of humanity.

Music is often called society's art, and, though, in a sense, vulgar, the expression does not lack significance, for, of all the arts, music is the popular cause or pretext for mutual association ; — fanfares and hurdy-gurdies afford, alas, only too striking a proof of the fact. Men come together in greater and more enthusiastic numbers at the call of music, than to gaze at pictures or marbles or the beauties of architecture. There are no festivals but those of music, and no such crowd of pilgrims wends its way towards the Parthenon, or the Hermes of Praxiteles, or the Madonna of the Sistine chapel, as that which throngs the road to the theatre of Bayreuth. The public of the summer-gardens crowd around the military bands, rather than the statues, and the Parisian pleasure-seeker is abandoning the Louvre, more and more, for the Sunday concerts. Music in its very demand for silence, stifles every discordant, importunate and alien voice, demanding too that, in and through her influence, all should be as one. It is only too true, that she rarely obtains this unity, — almost never that silence which she loves ; but it is her right and of her nature to strive towards this ideal, and the whole force of her

influence, and our complete possession of her are purchased only at this price. Most music is written to be heard by the many, and that sad, young king, in his empty theatre, deprived the art to which he accorded his proud and lonely homage, of much of its high dignity. Even more, each musical genre appeals to and commands its particular audience. There exists a sort of correlation and of necessary proportion, between those who perform and those who listen ; a study, indeed, of the quartette, symphony and opera, from a sociological point of view, might not be impossible.

Music, or to speak with more precision a musical work, is more than a work, it is a thing of proportions,—almost a being, collective and social : the terms alone of the musical language,—accord, harmony, concert,—prove this. In music, moreover, as in architecture, the elements are united by relations of mathematical precision ; but while, in architecture, the combinations or groups so formed, are inanimate and dumb, those of music move and speak, or rather sing, possessing thus a twofold life, for which we search in vain, in the most beautiful shapes of marble and stone. All music is thus socially alive ; even an isolated melody is multiple, in the sense that it is constituted of periods,—members of a phrase, repeating themselves,—ever separat-

ing and reuniting. Again, from the moment in which harmony joins with melody and accompanies it, a new fellowship is established and more numerous relations are produced. Who has listened to the Adagio of Beethoven's sonata in C-sharp minor, without feeling the sweet, consoling friendliness, with which the arpeggios envelop the broken-hearted song? Or what is the Fugue, if not the most rigorous of associations between the elements or the creations of sound? And the same may be said of the Variation, in a freer and more pliable sense. The contrast between certain variations of Händel and the "Etudes symphoniques" of Schumann, is most strikingly apparent, from our present point of view, though both works consist only of a theme and its variations. But just what, then, is expressed by the term, "a theme and its variations"? An evolution of forms, or rather of multiplied and changing forces, under the dominating influence of a superior and uninterrupted force; a sort of economy, a living, sentient hierarchy; a certain system of relations between the number and the unit, between the individual and the group. But in the work of Händel and that of Schumann, these relations are regulated by laws which are absolutely opposed. Calm and dignified, Händel's theme is followed up, in

all simplicity, by five "doubles" as they were called; and well called, for such variations consist of little more than a numerical augmentation of more and more rapid values, in a regular procession of two and two. Other than this, no change of measure or of rhythm creeps in; all conflict is avoided, all passion is absent, from the voices, which are ever more numerous, but no one of which ever wanders from its path, or allows itself to contradict or to contest. Everywhere accord and unanimity dwell in mutual assent, creating a genial, happy association, sufficient to maintain in a certain order and discipline, a remembrance of the theme, accepted and obeyed by all. But what do we find when we turn to Schumann? In the first place, a harsher and yet, less decisive theme; sadder and at the same time less firm: and instantly we feel that it brings us war, not peace; that it comes to divide, not to unite. The first "Etude symphonique" announces, at once, an impending revolt, which bursts forth magnificently in the second, as the voices of wild, solitary, protesting souls, refuse to submit, or even to be associated, with one another. Thenceforth, each variation frees itself from restraint, one by fantasy and caprice, another by egotism and pride; the idea, which should command, becomes the slave,—some-

times the victim, and is despised, perverted, well-nigh done to death.

This "beautiful disorder" is, doubtless, a "production of art," of a sublime art, which touches and moves us to-day more than that of Händel; and, yet, it is disorder. Instead of a hierarchy, this is an independence, which is almost anarchy; in any case, a social representation and a sociological ideal, which is in absolute opposition to that of Händel.

Three elements, or three factors, it was said by Guyau, constitute the social character of the æsthetic emotion, and it would seem, that these same three social characteristics form the framework of the musical idea.

The first element is recognition by memory, and no art is more subtle than music in carrying this satisfaction to the mind, this joy to the senses; for the most part she presents us with no gift, that henceforth, and constantly, she does not greet us with it anew. "It is sweeter to regain an old love than to embrace a new," and, in music, we are ever repossessing ourselves of that, which we have loved; for the law of return is a universal law. But this return will never be a repetition and still less a retrogression: it is, on the contrary a progress and a growth; a promotion of form, in which the musical idea, has an ever

richer and higher life. And yet, it is a return, and, in a fugue of Bach, a symphony of Beethoven, or the final pages of "Die Walküre" or "Parsifal," there is no greater beauty, than that which the musician may laud, with the philosopher, — "the beauty of a regained identity."

According to Guyau, again, the æsthetic emotion is social, likewise, in the sympathy, which it awakens within us, with the author of a work. Now, with the exception, perhaps, of the poet, we sympathise with no artist, as with the musician ; more than in the achievement of painter, sculptor or architect, we find the musician in his work, for it paints for us his character, in colours so vivid, that we say of him, as of the poet, — "it is the man." The personality of the musician affirms itself in his music, and in the genius of a Mozart, or a Beethoven lies his own deepest individuality, as well as his widest grasp upon his fellow-men. The very voice of the musician speaks to us in sonata and symphony : the hand which painted this picture or cut that marble, or planned yonder edifice, may, by now, be lying stiff and cold, but how may we believe that this voice which thrills our ears, with immortal harmonies, is silenced in death ? It would seem that the master lives near us, in the higher, finer

realm of music, calling to us in his work and drawing us to him : we reach out towards him, and about him cling our sympathies and the tenderness, which only the personality of another can inspire.

And, finally, the æsthetic emotion is social, in its faculty of awakening within us a sympathy for those personalities, which the artist creates. But is it within the power of music to herself create a personality? The influence of music through the voice of song, responds, with no shade of doubt, to the question ; the music of the stage creates the soul of its characters, and the personalities of an opera, if it be the work of a true musician, exist in sound. The heroes of Wagner, great poet though he sometimes was, rise to their noblest heroism, in their musical life, and it was rather by sound, than by legend and poetry, that the master was inspired to his creative heights. In the last scene of "Die Walküre," for instance, it is the words which could be omitted, with least detriment to the dramatic and moral beauty of the whole. Or, again, at the opposite confines of art, imagine Cherubino reciting, rather than singing, "Voi che sapete." Where would be its revery and languor and uneasiness? But let its mere notes, be sung, on the contrary, without a word, and nothing, or, at

most, but little, is lost of the feeling and character,—of the very life of the song.

Instrumental music, it is true, does not impress any strongly marked personality upon our minds, or character imbued, with this or that sentiment ; but, gaining in extent what it may lose in precision, it represents sensibility itself, with a wider efficacy, as impersonal and existing in and through itself ; a quality, which corresponds, in the order of the sensibilities, to the idea of the abstract in the order of the reason. By virtue of this very correspondence too, we may comprehend the grandeur of pure music, from a sociological point of view. It has been well said, by M. Brûnetière : “ It is through abstract ideas that we hold communion with one another, and, in this sense, we cannot but admit that they are the bond of society. Our individual ideas separate us, whilst abstract ideas tend to bring us together and to reunite us. Our individual ideas are ourselves, the most personal and, in consequence, the most eccentric of our thoughts ; but the idea which we share with our fellow-men, is the most human thing in us, and therefore the most truly social.” Now all this is no less true of universal sentiments, than of universal ideas ; by these we approach one another through the mind,—by those, through the heart, and to express univer-

sal impersonal feeling is the object and the accomplishment of instrumental music. What one, definable, distinct joy or sorrow stirs your heart, in a Finale or an Adagio of Beethoven? It is nameless, but it is the sorrow, — the joy of humanity. It is yours and it is mine; a voice which comes to us in common, for yesterday it was ringing in your ears and, to-morrow, it will have sounded in mine. Thus the master-works of pure music consist, in a greater degree than those of any sister art, of elements, which tend to draw men together, rather than to separate them; possessing nothing intrinsically individual and therefore egotistical, these elements are broad and profound, and humanity is willingly absorbed in the depths, in which she sees herself mirrored.

III.

The sociological nature, or spirit, rather of music, as we have been analysing it, has been evident in every epoch, and at every turning-point of its history. Varying often and metamorphosed, no doubt, for we see that society which music established and, at the same time, represented, now widening its influence, and again contracting; but the spirit within is immortal and the different conditions of music, through the centuries, have been

only its various manifestations. The antique monody, the plain-song, the polyphony of the middle ages up to the time of Palestrina ;—melody in the great Italian centuries ;—the symphony and modern symphonic drama,—each one of these different styles or categories of music should be considered as the expression of a sympathetic relation, between a certain music and a certain society.

Music occupied a most important place in the social life of the old civilisations ; a feature of all national or private ceremonies, and of all civil and religious fêtes, it invariably had a part in the representations of the theatre ; concurring with poetry and the dance, or, rather, with the theory of dancing, in the forming of a high art, that of the lyric choral ; of which our oratories and cantatas are but an imperfect image, and, as it were, the mutilated remains. In such esteem did Greece hold the art of music, that “The muse of Pindar,” says M. Gevaert, “celebrated, in unstinted praise the successes of a flute-player, Midas of Agrigentum.”¹ The art was considered from a utilitarian point of view, as we should say to-day ; it had a rôle to play in education, and the state even instituted certain gymnastic and musical exercises, under the name of “Gymnopædia,”

¹ *Histoire et théorie de la musique de l' antiquité.*

which youths were constrained to attend. The very nomenclature, the *εθος*, demonstrates the sociological character of ancient Greek music; strictly allied to the nature of the people whose name it bore, it was the very expression and musical sign of a social and national soul. These expressions according to Aristides Quintilianus, were the principles of public manners, — “*ἀρχαὶ τῶν ἡθῶν.*”¹ Varying principles of varying manners, whence the distinctions in customs, drawn, in all times, by philosophers and legislators. We are reminded of that well-known passage of the “*Republic,*” in which Plato, after having advised the omission in education, of all plaintive, minor strains, as unworthy of being used in the character-forming of the future guardians of the state, authorises only Dorian and Phrygian harmonies; music, from which he drew an ideal, which may well be called sociological, appealing, as it did, to warrior, magistrate and even priest, — in a word, to the citizen. Such, too, was the august mission which Aristotle assigned to music; — the making of men and “*citizens,*” the latter term appearing, again and again, in his writings. Long before the development of Hellenic philosophy, the institutions of Thaletas had entered largely as elements in the legislation of Lycurgus,

¹ M. Gevaert, op. cit.

and we find Pindar invoking Apollo " who introduced in the heart, the peaceable love of law."¹

But thanks to the miracle of genius, this art, so widely social and popular, is no less delicate and subtle. The music of the Greeks consisted, as M. Gevaert has said : of " a melodious design, sober in contours and expression, and indicating the feeling which pervaded it, by certain exquisite notes of an extreme simplicity, accompanied by a small number of harmonic intervals."² Doubtless, to so great musicians as we would feign consider ourselves, this may seem as nothing ; but, for the Greeks, it sufficed. No masterpiece was too rarely refined for the crowd ; the crowd itself, formed the " élite " and every member of it was a chosen spirit.

" Puis, quand tout fut changé, le ciel, la terre et l' homme," then, Christianity gathered into her arms Greco-Latin melody ; the music of her churches grew out of it, and, whispered low at the first from the catacombs, it developed in her Basilicas, till, under Roman and Gothic arches, innumerable, suffering multitudes, raised the great, sad voice of the Middle Ages in songs, once sung by a happier people, under brighter skies.

In a less degree, perhaps, than the homophony

¹ M. Gevaert, op. cit. passim.

² Op. cit. *having one sound
or note*

of the plain song, the vocal polyphony of the Gallo-Belgians and the Italians may be said to be sociological in its character ; but, it too, existed by and for the people. The popular element invaded music, more and more, and, until the reforms of the Council of Trent, liturgical offices were sung to themes of dance and war,—when, indeed, they did not savour of love and the wine-shop.

And profane music, too, drew its inspiration from the people. In the sixteenth century, we find it seeking truth and life in the voice of the populace, when Clément Jannequin exercised his ingenuity in reproducing the street-cries of Paris, imitating the chit-chat of gossips, the crash of battle, or the cries of the chase. While the german Eckard represented the tumult of the Piazza San Marco, and Strigio composed the “ Prattle of women at their washing,” “ Cicalamento delle donne al bucato.”¹

The music of this period is purely sociological, not only in the themes which it borrowed, and the subjects of which it treats, but by its very nature and constitution. As we have seen elsewhere,

¹ Curious details, concerning these various works, and notably of the last, may be found, in M. Romain Rolland's *Histoire de l'opéra en Europe, avant Lulli et Scarlatti*; Paris, 1895, Ernest Thorin.

in a study of Palestrina,¹ there was nothing egotistical in vocal polyphony, nor even individual ; it was, on the contrary, a truly catholic art,—that is universal, and in a sense, unanimous. For, while all other music, excepting, of course, the plain-song, seems to admit, with the solo, and the preëminence of one part or voice, a certain privileged and personal interpretation of the thought, the Palestrinian art tolerated no distinction, no prerogative. All phrases are of common importance, and no voice dominates over or disdains another ; pride and self-assertion efface themselves, and thus it is, if the author may be permitted to quote from his own words, that : “ Palestrinian polyphony is one of the most beautiful expressions in music, not only of faith, but of charity.”

Then, more tardily along the path of music, than those of the other arts, but in no different guise, came the Renaissance ; — that great rebirth, which substituted for the prevailing principle of association and of number, that of individualism ; and, under its sway, music which, like man himself, had long existed in a collective form only, once more appeared in its particular and individual character. First the recitative, and later, and more emphatically still, melody, — are found,

¹ Portraits and Silhouettes of Musicians.

and as it were, created anew, by the genius of Italy, disengaged herself from vocal counterpoint ; but, in the pride of her regained beauty, she turned away from the crowd, which once she had loved so much, and the most popular of the arts became the most aristocratic.¹

It was in the Florence of the seventeenth century, that lyric drama first saw the light, in the saloon of Giovanni Bardi, conte di Vernio ; and for long it felt the influences of its birthplace, not only throughout Italy, but in France, and, even in Germany : this was the Golden Age of the concert-opera, and the cantata, and all those musical fancies, most calculated to charm the upper classes, rather than the people. Academies of music flourished over the entire peninsula, and private theatres were opened in the palaces of the great Italian families ; the most celebrated being that of the Farnesi, still to be seen at Parma, and the Barberini theatre at Rome. The librettist of the latter, was Cardinal Rospigliosi, afterwards Pope Clement IX., and such men as Mazzochi and Marazzoli were the musicians.

¹ Concerning the development of the Italian opera of the aristocracy, as given in private theatres and by virtuosi, see M. Romain Rolland's work cited above. We are indebted to this work for much of our information on this subject.

Elsewhere, too, at the house of Cardinal Corsini, the "Aretusa" of Vitali was given, before Borghesi, and nine other cardinals. "This fine show of princes," says M. Rolland, "possessed one defect, in its very nature, in that its character was exclusively princely: its aristocratic perfection, set it apart from common life, and the soul of the people."¹ This narrowed art, addressed itself to a restricted public, and lent itself to an interpretation, which was inevitably individual in its tendency; only moderately sociological, the music of those days, favoured the reign, or rather the tyranny of virtuosity, finally developing into a pernicious personality, which was nothing else than an æsthetic egoism. The position of such a virtuoso as Loreto Vittori, for example, was most extraordinary. His contemporaries have left us marvellous stories of this composer-singer. Captured by Cardinal Ludovisi, from the service of Cosmo de Medici II., he was allowed to sing to none but the greatest personages; private séances took place at the palaces of the Barberini, the Aldobrandini, and the Ubaldi, till the renown of the artist spread far and Urban VIII. admitted him to his chapel, and conferred upon him the title of "Cavaliere."

"The wonders of his genius," writes M. Rol-

¹ Op. cit.

land, "carried his audiences to transports, of which we can scarcely conceive. Erythræus, who elected himself the artist's biographer and apologist, recounts that many, suffocated with emotion, as they listened to Vittori's singing, would throw open their garments for breath ; and such was his popularity in Rome, that, upon one occasion, cardinals and nobles were driven out from the salon where he sang, by the common people, who had forced their way into the palace of the Jesuits. His concerts became miniature battlefields, where the populace, if unsuccessful in their attempts to enter the building, would crowd around the palace in the endeavour to catch some accents of the music within."

Neither was it from the theatre and concert hall alone, that the people were banished ; from art itself, they were completely and universally excluded. Even in Germany, the popular and national genius seems to have recoiled before this aristocratic phase of Italian art ; and music, or, at all events, the opera, grew to be nothing more than an imported article. Little wonder, indeed, when we recall the rough influences of the Thirty Years' war. "We had been obliged to fight too hard for the necessities of life" ; writes a German of to-day, "and the ruling classes, amongst our people, had become so estranged from the

masses, that, for centuries, the common people were separated from the upper ranks, by an impassable gulf, losing, thus, all share in the culture, tastes, or æsthetic satisfactions of the nobles."¹ And yet, in their darkest days of misery, there was born to the suffering, overwhelmed masses, a consoler; for the gentle Heinrich Schütz was a contemporary of the "long war," and his masterpiece, the "Symphonia Sacra": *Venite ad me, omnes qui aboratis*" is full of tenderness and infinite pity. But when he came to his own, his own, alas, knew him not; they were suffering too deeply, and the days were too sad; for that great voice rose in a desert, and amidst ruins.

A century must pass, before music should widen its bounds; before, under the strong, guiding hands of Händel and Bach, the German principle of plurality should finally oppose itself, first in the fugue, and later in the symphony, to the Italian rule of individualism. The most beautiful pages of Händel and Bach, are strongest, perhaps, in their appeal to the multitude; little as we may have been in the habit of thinking it, there is a grand sociological, universal spirit in the "Hallelujah" chorus of the Messiah, as the cry of joy, bursts as it were, from the four corners of the earth. And when the

¹ Degeneration, by Max Nordau.

choruses of Bach unfold through the air, the wonderful waves of their polyphonies,—when, like giant cathedrals, the “*Kyrie*,” the “*Gloria*,” the “*Credo*” of the B-minor mass, or the epilogue of “*Die grosse Passion nach Matthäus*” rise glorious, before our eyes, then, indeed, we cannot but bow the head in the presence of the sovereign masterpieces, which breathe forth the piety and prayer, the gaiety and the suffering, the faith and hope and love, which gladden, sadden and console humanity.

And is not the genial master of the “*Seasons*,” — the Haydn, who is often sublime, very human too? Though he lived by the patronage of princes, he was of the people, and this he never forgot. One of the first to take, by the hand, the German muse and lead her forth from the sanctuary, in which Bach had left her imprisoned, he showed her the fields and prairies and woods; and the sacred virgin, consecrated heretofore to the service of the church, became through him the friend of the peasants whom he loved so much; — of the huntsmen and labourers and vine dressers. Nor was this all, for, in Haydn, we find the sociological ideal of music changed: he substituted the free form of the symphony for the fugue, with its rigorous elements of association, and, in so doing, was the precursor of Beethoven;

—of Beethoven, rather than of Mozart, whose genius was neither heralded nor patterned after. The spirit of Mozart was a miraculous and solitary flower; his soul was not the “Symphonialis anima” of the Middle-Ages. For, whether it be an air from the “Marriage of Figaro,” or from “Don Juan”; the call of Susanne under the chestnut trees, or the plaint of Elvira from her balcony; whether it be the Largo from his Quintette with clarionet, or the smiling entrance of his symphony in G-minor, every melody of Mozart appeals to us less as the interpreter of the multitude,—or even of some chosen few, than as voicing one unique and beautiful soul. The very essence of the great master’s genius is unity, rather than number;—its highest claim, perhaps, to be called divine.

Beethoven on the contrary was greatest in plurality; and his symphonies, the grandest representations ever given in music, of universal life, the richest and, at the same time, the most harmonious, the freest and yet the most formulated. His ideal rarely lacks a sociological or social element, and the supreme beauty and very foundation of his work, is an immense sympathy. Living, men accused him of misanthropy and of a rough, lonely sort of pride; but dead, he has been justified: and his critics have

allowed themselves to be convinced that he sought solitude, only that he might conceal the infirmity, which filled him with a very desperation of shame. "Oh you," he cries, in the famous "Will" of Heiligenstadt, "You, who think me full of rancour and hatred,—you who rail upon me as a misanthrope, how unjustly do you accuse me! You know nothing of the secret reasons for this unhappy demeanour. From my earliest years, heart and mind have inclined towards kindness. . . . But, coming into the world with an ardent soul and sensitive temperament, and with a love for the social relations of life, I was early constrained to isolate myself, and to pass my existence in solitude and retreat. . . . It is impossible for one who is unhappy to divert his sadness in the society of others, to join in their elevated conversations and the outpourings of their inmost thoughts. Alone! Always alone!" Save when an imperious necessity forces me to leave my isolation, I pass my life in the solitude of an outlaw, and, if chance leads me into the midst of men, immediately I am seized with a mortal anxiety, lest I should expose myself to the danger of unveiling the secrets of my deafness. . . . Oh my God! Thy regard penetrates from on high, the depths of my soul. Thou seest my heart, and Thou knowest,

dost thou not, that nought breathes there, but love of men, and desire for their good?"¹

And, indeed, this desire and this love beget the governing spirit of Beethoven's entire work; with a God-given sense of Divine Omnipotence, he shared the infinite Love of the Almighty. To comprehend his masterpieces, one must interpret with largeness of heart: take, for example, that one of his symphonies, called the "Eroica." Consecrated to the glory of a hero, the name of Bonaparte was inscribed upon its title-page, but all the world knows how that name was effaced in dishonour, when the master-genius learned that his hero had been crowned Emperor. Reclaiming his great work from him, whom henceforth, he judged unworthy, the author rededicated it to the heroes of the world; bringing back to the feet of the heroism of humanity, that beautiful homage, which had, for a moment, wandered aside from the path of its true mission. For such, in truth, is the vocation of this symphony, which soars above the efforts of any one human soul, and reaches far beyond any unique subject, be it the story of one of the greatest among men. Though martial, this musical epic of those, who have "ranged the world, less

¹ Quoted by Victor Wilder, in his work on Beethoven; Charpentier, Paris.

by their footsteps, than by their victories," is the "Epopoea," too, of those who have left footprints, "less of their victories, than of their good deeds."¹ But the "Eroica" is yet wider in the comprehensive touch of its genius ; a stranger to nothing which is grand or beautiful in will or conscience, it celebrates and glorifies the humble and obscure victories, hidden within a man's own soul. And let no one fear that such a meaning, read into the great symphony will degrade or restrict its mission ; for so, on the contrary is it exalted beyond any personal and individual acceptance, to be the great representation of the morality of the universe.

But if the Beethoven of the "Eroica" sympathises with humanity, he of the "Pastoral Symphony," writes in closest touch with nature. It is said that the master one day conducted his friend, Schindler, to a retired valley, in the environs of Vienna.² As they sat under the shade of the trees, near a brook, Beethoven asked his companion sadly, if the birds were singing, as it was long since he had possessed the power of hearing them. "It was here," said he, "that I wrote the 'Scene by a Brookside,' while goldfinches, quails, nightingales and cuckoos, one and all, composed with

¹ Bossuet.

² In the year 1823, see Victor Wilder's Beethoven.

me." When Schindler suggested that the goldfinch had no part in the "Pastoral Symphony," the master drew a sketch of the work out of his pocket, and marking an arpeggio, which soars up from the orchestra, at certain moments, in a very fusillade of brilliant sound, he rendered all honour to the goldfinch, that no songster should be forgotten in this chorus of the birds. Thus Beethoven caught inspiration from nature,—and from all nature, we must not fail to notice; for, even as the "Eroica" is not the poem of some one great hero, so the "Pastoral" is no local, narrowed picture of some individual country-side; but, on the contrary, is composed of the least rare elements of everyday life,—a setting to common things taken in their most familiar aspects, and voicing the very general sensations and sentiments, which they would awaken. "Agreeable impressions on arriving in the country," "Scene by a Brookside," "A storm." In these pictures, lies the nature of the world, none the less profound because common: the nature of all the world, of all countries and of every day; the nature, in which alone could dwell, that great spirit, which in humanity or beyond it, could conceive of no communion apart from the universal and the infinite. In such a soul as that of Beethoven, sympathy could but grow and deepen and

ever widen, till the end, and so, at the end, we find the "Mass in D" and the "Choral Symphony" those two great sociological works, in which the genius of the master and his love for his fellow-men, seem to rise above their finite limits to the very confines of the Infinite.

The "Kyrie" of this "Mass in D" is wonderful, from this point of view; wonderful in the fullness and the unanimity of its reach, but more beautiful,—unequalled, perhaps, in the writings of Beethoven, is the "Agnus Dei." Inscribed above this last portion of the mass, we read the words: "Bitte um innern und äussern Frieden." The prayer for peace is first developed in an Andante, the uniformity of which weighs upon us, though we may not dare to wish it less drawn out: "Pacem, pacem, pacem," the voices repeat to satiety, as though to drag the precious gift from Divine lassitude; but, suddenly, all changes,—rhythm, measures, tonality, and we hear the dull, muffled call of the clarions. The orchestra moves, trembles, while, over its agitation, the three voices of contralto, tenor and soprano, throw up, one after the other a terrified appeal to the Lamb of God. Only a cry, but it is sublime: the cry of hearts failing in horror, before the sudden apparition of war, which the "hideous trumpets" have awakened. And the

cry, too, of the master himself, of a Beethoven whom no one knew ; for though now, doubtless, at the end of life's march, as in the old days of the Eroica, he could still lead men to battle, Heaven forefend that such days should ever return. Without disclaiming the heroism of war, he conjures up a picture of its horrors ; and, henceforth, it is peace, and not glory, that this great soul asks of God, for those fellow-men, towards whom his heart melts in tenderness and pity.

Now it is peace for which he prays, and tomorrow it will be joy.

“Spark from the fire that gods have fed—
Joy—thou Elysian child divine.
Fire-drunk, our airy footsteps tread,
Oh ! holy one, thy holy shrine.

“Strong custom rends us from each other,
Thy magic all together brings ;
And man in man but hails a brother,
Wherever rest thy gentle wings.

CHORUS :

“Embrace ye millions ; let this kiss,
Brothers, embrace the earth below !
Yon starry worlds, that shine on this,
One common Father know !”¹

¹ Schiller's “Hymn to Joy.” Translated by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Bart.

Such is the theme of the last pages of the last symphony; such are the "Novissima verba" of Beethoven. It is quite permissible,—though our right would be contested by a certain school, to prefer some other of the master's great Finales to that of the Ninth Symphony: that of the "Eroica" or the "Pastoral," for instance, or those of the A or C-minor symphonies. We may admire in any one of these, more exact proportions and a perfection more perfected, more of measure, with no less of grandeur;—even, perhaps, the expression of a joy, no less unanimous, and more radiant and enthusiastic. But there is incorporated in the Finale of the Ninth Symphony a deeply convincing witness to the power of social sentiment, or social love, which the hearer cannot but feel with intensest sympathy. In the grand design, the symphonic principle employs,—seems to multiply, indeed, all its resources; and never was there collected in the symphonic form, a richer concourse of more constantly accruing elements, forms and sound-forces. The orchestra recalls the motives of the preceding parts subordinating them to the definitive and sovereign theme, which it discovers to us, going on to sustain and enrich it, though soberly, with harmonies which are still elementary: then the voices intervene giving the signal for an

evolution, the general meaning, fullness and final development of which, are too well known to need detailed mention here. The progress of Joy, and its growing fruition, from the first bar of the Finale, are familiar to us; we know, too, the incessantly changing character of that joy and how, at first, an inward, serious emotion, it comes to overflow all narrow bounds, breaking out, here, in martial fanfares, there, in sacred canticles: a contagious, communicative joy, which gains a nearer and nearer access to our hearts, and mounts height after height, till all creatures,—all creation is lost,—annihilated in the infinite happiness.

Annihilated, did we say? No, Beethoven allured and lead humanity to being, not to nothingness; not to the abolition, but to the blossoming into fullest bloom, of this life and the life eternal. In spite of the traditions, or legends of such commentators as Nohl and, following in his steps, Victor Wilder, we cannot but read a hymn of joy, rather than of victory in Schiller's Ode, and, above all, in the Finale of Beethoven. Possibly Schiller, in fear of censure, wrote "Freude," when his heart was crying "Freiheit," but it is "Freude," with no uncertain sound, that Beethoven sings. Joy is superior to the human liberty, which it survives: joy is our

final end; one day, and forever, we shall no longer be free, but we shall be happy. Such a comprehension elevates and exalts the thought of Beethoven; his dream, or his hope soars above the earth, and the association conceived by his genius, is no longer that of the living, but of the elect; — no longer that of time, but of eternity.

The evolution of the sociological idea, or ideal, has been uninterrupted, from the time of Beethoven, to our own, or, in other words, to that of Wagner; when Germany opposed her first national and popular masterpiece, — “*Der Fireschütz*,” to the aristocratic opera of Italy. The German “lied” has responded to the cantatas of court and saloon, to highborn recitatives and the vocalisations of virtuosi; and such a master as Schubert has not esteemed the humblest of the world, unworthy of his genius: the shepherd and the huntsman, the miller’s pretty daughter or the spinning-girl, the postboy, sounding his horn, or the fisherman, beside the brook.

French opera, too, from “*La Muette*” to “*L’ Africaine*,” without perhaps constituting a popular school, still often appeals, in its masterpieces, to the sentiments of the crowd. The personages of its mis-en-scène have increased in number; and such men as Rossini, Halévy and Meyerbeer, thoughtful of general sentiment and

the desires of the public, gave more and more importance to the choruses and ensembles ; what may be called the sociological beauties of "William Tell," or of "La Juive ;" of "Les Huguenots" or of "La Prophéte" are not among the least of the attractions of those operas.

But analogous changes have operated, outside of the theatre, in what may be called the order of pure music. The orchestra, organ of the symphony, was immeasurably enriched by the complex genius of Berlioz ; for, whether in the creation of new timbres, in his modifications of the law of relation, between the instrumental families, or in the augmenting,—in proportions, indeed, which were often exorbitant,—of the numerical values of sound-unities, Berlioz figured as one of the two great modern masters, in whom the collective principle enhanced and surpassed the individual.

The second of these two masters was Richard Wagner, who transported the symphony to the theatre, and who, in his works, but especially in his theory of æsthetics, claimed to be the most sociological of musicians. This has been made very plain to us by one of his commentators.¹

¹ La doctrine esthétique de Richard Wagner, by Houston Stewart Chamberlain : *Revue des Deux Mondes*, October 15th, 1895.



WAGNER.

According to Wagner, art is in its very essence sociological, in the sense that it is, or should be, an association of all the arts: poetry, painting, architecture, the art of modelling, which is animated sculpture,—all must concur with music, in the realisation of the work of the Wagnerian art. Assuredly it is not in music alone, that this man is great.

But again, one of the fundamental principles of Richard Wagner's doctrine is, that art has come from the people, and should be returned to them; that all highest art is necessarily "general, collective, responding to the artistic needs, which all men have in common;"¹ and a chapter of "*Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*" bears this inscription: "The people,—efficient force in the work of art." "If the artist," he writes again, "is to accomplish a grand and truly artistic creation, we must all collaborate with him. The tragedies of Æschylus and Sophocles were the work of Athens."² Wagner, even went so far, as to nullify, or to nearly nullify, personality in his art-work; he never feared to despoil his music of the individual, that he might invest it with association. "However sublime the genius of an artist, a thousand ties bind him ever to the society which surrounds him," and, in the same vein, he

¹ H. S. Chamberlain.

² H. S. Chamberlain.

believes that : "the isolated individual can invent nothing, may only appropriate an invention, common to all." He never ceased, too, to protest against the current use of the word, Genius, which seemed to him too light a term, with which to designate a power of artistic creation, rather collective, than individual : he would never admit that the artist should be considered as a prodigy, fallen from the skies ; and saw in him, only the "bursting into bloom of a collective power ;—a bloom, capable, in its turn, of producing new life germs."¹

Nothing is more in conformity with the pure traditions of the German spirit, than such theories. The coöperation of all the arts, in the great Art-Work of Creation ; the social origin and end of art,—these ideas are familiar to us in the writings of philosophers, critics and poets, who lived and died before the birth of the master of Bayreuth. The presence of such ideals has been pointed out to us, by Mr. Chamberlain, and before him, by M. Edouard Rod,² in Lessing's "Laocoön," in Hegel's "Æsthetics," in the Alcestis of Herder and the Correspondence of Schiller and Goethe. Schiller, anxiously concerned with the growing segregation, and what he called, "the crumblings into the individual"

¹ Id.

² Wagner et l' esthétique allemande.

of society, looked to art alone, for the restoration of human unity. While, as for the Wagnerian formula : "the people,—efficient force in the work of art," we seem to find its ante-natal expression in Goethe's words : "only the human race in its totality, can really know nature, or live the purely human life."¹

"The purely human," or, in other words, that which is the most general, the most independent of all accident and special circumstance, of all contingency or local or historic formula ; "to express the essence of humanity as such," this is, for Wagner, the element and subject matter of art. And his opera must, therefore be, necessarily, legendary or mythical ; as, indeed, it was ; demonstrating the effect of theory upon practice,—of doctrinal sociology upon sociology at work.

But like effects are not wanting ; produced, not in the order of poetry, but in that of music itself ; in the realm where music reigns supreme.

The music of Wagner is sociological, above that of all other masters, in that it is based essentially, upon the principle of number : he overturned fashions and laws, reverently obeyed until his day, in the musical representing of people and

¹ H. S. Chamberlain.

of things ; he uncrowned vocal unity, for the enthronement of instrumental plurality, multiplying widely its elements, and proclaiming, henceforth, its sovereignty. Renewing, as it were, and revivifying the conditions of life, he decreed that this sovereignty should proceed, not from a unique force, but from a concourse of forces. We may well recall the profound words of Amiel upon this subject : "The works of Wagner," he wrote, in 1857, "are symphonic dramas rather than operas. He reclaims the voice to the rank of an instrument, and places it upon a level with violins, kettledrums and oboes, to be treated instrumentally. Man falls from his elevated position, and the centre of gravity passes into the baton of the orchestral conductor : this is music depersonalised, neo-Hegelian, omnigenous rather than individual. And thus it is to be the music of the future and of socialistic democracy, replacing the aristocracy of the heroic and subjective art."

The thoughtful writer, half a German himself, has admirably comprehended the German musician. The music of Wagner is, indeed, as Amiel says, "omnigenous," — a collection of infinitely small things : in every musical work to-day, even in our masterpieces, inconsiderable details replace more and more, the vast generalisations of other days. Nothing is in relation to

grand single causes and individual and sovereign rôles, but to innumerable and almost imperceptible elements.

And how shall we not feel the existence of mysterious and profound harmonies amidst the grand, diverse manifestations of thought and life? Such mysteries freighted the thoughts of one of our master-minds, as he meditated, one day, upon the burial of a great man. "It would be absurd to pretend," wrote M. de Vogué, the day after the death of Pasteur, "that the doctrine of Pasteur lends any support to our political and social systems, to democracy or universal suffrage; nay, even to socialism, viewed as an association of small interests leagued together, for the better dependence upon a larger body. . . . But it is no less true that man, ever uncertain and disturbed as to the worth of his frail structures, seeks a pattern for them in nature, the Eternal model; that he is encouraged and reassured, when this sage model shows, or seems to show him, such intentions as he has endeavoured to realise, in his ephemeral designs, actually consummated in the eternal scheme. And the doctrine of Pasteur announces one of these conformities; it establishes the law of number, and discovers the sources of life and the causes of death, in an infinity of very feeble existences,

which, become all powerful in their union, triumph over the most robust organisms. Now these thoughts of a great man discover themselves to us, at the very hour when society is working upon the establishment of identically the same ideas. Who cannot but reflect upon such simultaneous endeavour ? "¹

We could wish no other conclusion than these telling words, to our thoughts upon socialism, or sociology, in Wagnerian art,—the last link reached, in the evolution, which we have been striving to follow. The doctrine of Wagner announces, as does that of Pasteur, "one of these conformities," and discovers, too, in number,—in this infinity of small things,—the sources of life, of æsthetic life, if we may use a much abused term:—the world, meantime, awaiting a doctrine, which shall find through the agency of music, the causes of death, in this same omnipotent union of the many little things, into one great whole. Wagner's genius, too, delivers to us its discovery, at the very hour, in which identically the same changes are establishing themselves in all society; and, though it would be as absurd to overestimate this simultaneous effort, as the

¹ *L'Esprit Philosophique de Pasteur*, by M. le vicomte E.—M. de Vogué: *Revue des Deux Mondes*, October 15th, 1895.

other, yet, we cannot but pause to reflect upon the coincidence.

IV.

Having studied the nature of music, and glanced at its history, from a sociological point of view, it may be well before closing, to consider from the same standpoint, its influence, its duties, and the rôle which it plays as a blessing to humanity.

“All the disorders and wars which occur in the world come only from a neglect of the study of music. . . . Does not war arise from a lack of union among men? And if all men should learn the principles of music, would they not thus acquire the habits of general accord, and establish universal peace in the world?” So spoke the music-master of M. Jourdain to his pupil, and, doubtless, both were persuaded of the truth of his words. Two centuries later, a very different master used much the same language, for Wagner held a scarcely less vast idea of his art, and entertained for it no lower ambitions. He hoped all, claimed all, promised all for it;—all,—even to a solution of the enigma of the world, to a response to the eternal, universal,—Why? Like Schopenhauer, he considered the knowledge of

the artistic, the highest degree of acquisition, which the mind can reach, and the only means, by which human thought can attain to and comprehend the essence of things. He proclaims that life can be "supportable," only to the man, who dwells in a society, in which "art constitutes the highest function."¹ And his dearest dream was to reëstablish between art and life, those relations, which the civilisation of the ancients created and which our later civilisation has destroyed, or, at best, altered. To this chimerical restoration he saw not, nor he would for long allow himself to see, any obstacles ; he was loath to acknowledge that the conditions of humanity have been virtually created anew, or that our society consists no longer, of a happy and intelligent aristocracy, served by thousands of slaves, or that,—most cogent discouragement of all, perhaps—the Greeks were a people, a little kingdom, of artists, and what the Germans, the Italians, or the French of to-day, are not and never can be. Beautiful and wise as was his original idea, Wagner ended by demanding more from the origin and social destiny of his art, than it was in her power to render him : lurking in the depths of his soul lay the sad realisation of this, and he was anticipating the fatal results of his

¹ See H. S. Chamberlain, *op. cit.*

exaggeration when he wrote : " Because Goethe and Schiller,— Mozart and Beethoven sprang from the bosom of the German people, a great number of mediocre souls imagine only too easily, that these great spirits are part of themselves ; and the mass of the people believes, with a demagogic satisfaction, that itself is Goethe and Schiller,— Mozart and Beethoven." Ah, indeed ! But who then, as M. Nordau very reasonably objects, has taught such a belief to the mass of the people, if not Wagner himself, when he declared that this same mass was " the efficient force in the work of art,— the artist of the future "? As for that other Wagnerian theory, of an æsthetic reform, which is to procure universal happiness, no one could treat its exorbitant pretensions with more sense and irony than M. Nordau has thrown into his criticism : " In what does the corruption of society and the untenable state of affairs manifest itself to his eyes ? In the fact that our managers give operas, full of skipping ariettas, and put ballets upon the stage. And how shall humanity work out its salvation ? In the working out of the musical drama of the future ! "

We smile, but rather sadly, as one smiles at too beautiful a dream. Alas ! We dare not promise ourselves, much less the multitude, a so-

cial life, of which art shall be the highest function ; such an existence will never be possible to humanity. The knowledge of the artistic may be the highest round, in the ladder of learning, but who among us ever reach the highest rounds ? Who of us sojourn in the " serene temples " of the poet, the savan and the artist ? Here, indeed, we may call up the radiant visions of Wagner, before the tribunal of his own sad clairvoyance. In " Opera and Drama " he wrote : " No one can be more convinced than am I myself, that the realisation of the drama which I have conceived, depends upon conditions which render it actually impossible, not only to me, but to wills and capabilities, infinitely superior to my own. Such a realisation depends upon a social state, and upon a collective collaboration, that are exactly opposed to those which we now have." ¹ And will not the conditions of society, ever be thus ? We cannot permit ourselves to suppose otherwise, and if, indeed, the æsthetic ideal of Wagner shall, one day, be fully realised, we reserve the right to ask, whether, then, the dawn of universal felicity is actually broken.

But we may, at least, gather the residuum of a principle, from these broad doctrines and great imaginings :— that of the obligation and social

¹ Quoted by H. S. Chamberlain, op. cit.

duty of art. The artistic can never be everything to the people, but it may be something, and should ever be increasingly more : into the order of joy, or, even that of the æsthetic life, though few may be chosen, many are called. A young priest, once said, generously, to a young audience : “There are so many social wounds, which cry for the hands of others,—for the hands of writers and artists, to their healing. . . .” And added, “In multiplying beauty, and in giving forth a sense of the beautiful, and its sincerity, you will be performing the most delightful and, perhaps, the most useful of all charities.”¹ Inasmuch, then, as musical beauty is, as we have seen, more sociological than that of any other art, it may also be more charitable. Let its influence be felt everywhere, and first and supremely, among the children : let music have its fixed place in the education of the people. A course lately opened in Paris under the auspices of the Correspondence générale de l’ Instruction primaire, has given excellent results, and “Chants populaires pour les Ecoles,” by MM. Maurice Bouchor and Julien Tiersot² is a little masterpiece of sociological art.

The children of the people should sing in

¹ *La vie pour les autres*, a lecture by Abbé Pierre Vignot.

² Hachette, 1895.

church, as well as in school, and, indeed, in the old days of France this was accomplished, for the cathedral schools did more for the musical culture of the multitude, than the modern Conservatory has ever dreamed of doing. Remember that, before the Revolution, France possessed four hundred of these schools ; that is to say, twelve or fifteen thousand musicians, of whom five thousand were chorus children. What democratic government of the present day may we expect to reorganise such useful associations ? Then the house of God was the “house of the people,” and what lessons of fraternal fellowship and of true unanimity the harmony of inanimate things, even, may teach the people ! How harmonious must have been the worship in that church of Saint Sauveur at Aix, in which the most humble of its servitors were musicians, who by the ringing of the bell in its tower, struck out the note which the organ must sound !¹ And what better apprenticeship could there be, to the social and charitable virtue of music ?

The children of the cathedral school of Rouen, so the old story reads, had never been allowed to sing outside the walls of their church. On a day, however, it happened that a certain bailiff of Évreux had sustained a cruel loss, which had

¹ *La Maitrise d'Aix*, by Abbé Marbot.

most sorely afflicted him. Now the feast of All Saints was at hand, and for as much as the bailiff lay ill in his home, permission was given to the children, to go and sing to him : “ and so sweet were their chants,” reports the chronicler, “ that the dolorous bailiff was all consoled.”¹

No system of education will ever be as valuable to France, as was that of the cathedral schools, in preparing the people for just those simple pleasures, which they seek more and more, and with which they should be made more and more familiar. We have charity organisations for giving work, let us also have charity organisations for giving the beautiful. “ Panem et circenses.”

On the day that he directed his first “ popular concert,” in the Paris hippodrome, a certain excellent musician, and kind-hearted man, did more for the happiness of the people and of their children than has any political reformer, or many an economist ; the salutary effects of his initiative and example are to be seen to-day. It is said of old Haydn, that he loved to assemble the peasants, of a Sunday, to regale them with a good repast and some good music ; these he called his “ days of magnificence.” Let him who has eyes to see and ears to hear, go in to some one

¹ *Histoire de la maîtrise de Rouen*, by Abbé Colette and Abbé Bourdon.

of the Lamoureux, or better still the Colonne concerts, which Paris gives, with so free a hand, to her people ; let him find himself a seat, in the very top of the house, — in “Paradise ;” so well named, for here it is that one sees the happiest of the crowd ; and as they listen, comprehend and applaud, let him say whether music does not herald the dawn of another “day of magnificence,” for the seething, toiling, suffering multitudes of Paris ? Perhaps the members of what we choose to call the lower grades of society, know better than do those of the upper, to profit by and enjoy such days ; the unanimous concourse of people, which music gathers together in common attention and emotion is represented in the audience of a popular and not of a fashionable concert. An ignorant, humble listener, quite probably a day-labourer, was my neighbour not long ago, at one of the Châtelet concerts in Paris. They were playing the “Romeo” of Berlioz : “Nuit sereine. — Le jardin des Capulets silencieux et désert.” — Recall the beautiful page, and how the chords rise into the air, — those wonderful, floating chords. Suddenly, I heard a strange voice, which trembled a little, reading, at my side, just the words : “Nuit sereine.” I looked at the man, and by his very manner of listening, I felt

that the freshness and serenity of the night was bathing his very soul, in the gentle memory of some long vigil of labour. As I left the place I dreamed of what "charity concerts" in the ideal sense of the word, might be: concerts given really for the people, in their presence, and in their honour; an alms of beauty, instead of an alms of coin. And I asked myself if it were impossible to discover to their eyes, if only for an hour, the profound conformities, between art and life, — even their life; between a beautiful work accomplished, and a great duty or a great virtue achieved? I could imagine a musical exegesis to the most Divine words, — be they even those of the Sermon on the Mount, and to just such a multitude as that to which those great words were addressed. Each beatitude should be uttered in music: "Blessed are the meek," Haydn would say to his beloved "little ones"; "Blessed," would Mozart sing, "are the pure in heart," and Beethoven, in his sad, heroic voice would cry: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." But first, that these children, in the life of the beautiful, should be gently initiated, there should be sung to them, the song, — that wonderful call of the old German master, Heinrich Schütz: "Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis." For this is perhaps the most ancient,

in any case, one of the loveliest masterpieces of sociological music. Here for the first time, the genius of the musician seems to bind itself in an eternal sympathy, with man, by the Divine promise of consolation and of comfort ; as the music sings, in its turn, to all those who are in trouble,—to those who bend beneath their burdens : “ Come unto me, and I will give you rest.”

But music does more than soothe,—it instructs, and the people find in it examples of conduct, as well as a sympathetic interest in their troubles ; it reveals to them, or should, if true to its mission, the necessary correspondence between eternal laws. But is all music then, worthy of this high mission ? No, doubtless ; no musical work, no masterpiece, even, has a like message of good to every man ; indeed, the most popular of our great musicians, to-day, and he who, at the close of our century, will have enjoyed the most wide-spread fame, will not, perhaps, from a sociological point of view, have done the greatest good. The people cannot know too well, or love too much, “ Tannhäuser,” “ Lohengrin,” or certain pages from the “ Tetralogy,” “ Die Meistersinger” or “ Parsifal ; ” but there are others of Wagner’s works, which, like those dangerous fashions, proscribed by Plato, in his “ Republic,” we

would gladly forbid or suppress. And perhaps the first of these works to be forbidden, or at least to be reserved, would be that of "Tristan and Isolde." All that is pernicious and anti-social in the work of Wagner, was never more clearly presented, than in that most powerful, most disturbing analysis, given by Gabriele D' Annunzio, in his "Il Trionfo della Morte." We are forced, on reading it, to ask whether the Wagner of "Tristan" has not been false to and vitiated the great principle and social force of love, in giving it as its end and ideal, death and not life? The great novelist of Italy, whose secret affinities predisposed him to taste deeper than another of these strange, unwholesome beauties, has not erred in his study. From the very Prelude, D' Annunzio recognises "the insatiable desire of destruction, exalted to intoxication;" and later, who can accuse him of slandering Isolde, or even of misunderstanding her, when he writes: "The very force of destruction manifested itself in this woman-magician, against the man whom she had elected—had vowed to death. . . . In proportion to its strength, her passion created within her a homicidal desire, revealing in the very roots of her being, an instinct, hostile to life,—a need of dissolution and annihilation. She scourged herself into seeking within herself

and around her some frightful power, which would strike and destroy and leave no trace." When Isolde, in the second act, extinguishes the torch, stamping it out with her feet, she is dominated by a ferocious joy and her heart bounds, not only at the approach of love, but also at the advent of death. "She offered her life and the life of him whom she had chosen on that fatal night, and entered with him, forever, into the shadow." The criticism, it may be urged, of a literateur or poet, whom the force of the music has escaped; but patience for a moment, and he takes us into the very depths of music, and to the hearth-stone of evil. Of the Finale of the second act, he writes: "In the impetuosity of the chromatic progressions, we hear the mad pursuit of a desired object which ever escapes capture, though it glitters so near. In the changes of tone and rhythm and measure, in the succession of syncopations, we feel the unintermittent search, the limitless covetousness and the lingering agony of a desire, ever deceived, never extinguished. . . . The fearful virtue of the philtre works upon the souls and the bodies of the two lovers, consecrated to death: nothing can quench this fatal ardour,—nothing but death. They have vainly essayed every caress, they have vainly summoned all their powers to unite in one supreme embrace."

. . . Their corporeal substance, their living personality is the obstacle, and a secret hate springs up in each breast, an unconquerable need of destruction,—a need of giving and of receiving death!"

Death! Always and everywhere, in the opera, as in the romance, it is death which triumphs! All activity, all personality destroyed, all effort sterile; all struggle vain and all victory impossible;—in a word all existence engulfed in an abyss of nothingness; such is the ideal of the poet and musician of "*Tristan*," and if Wagner never wrote anything more powerful, never did he produce anything more hurtful to the sociological mission of art. "I hope," wrote Gounod to Leo XIII., on dedicating to the latter his "*Mors et Vita*": "I hope that my humble work may prove of some utility, in the gaining of a better life, both for my brother men and for myself. *Ad incrementum vitae in fratribus meis et in meipso.*" The wise and welcome words teach that no works are socially healthful or beautiful, save as they vivify, — save as they make for life and not for death. Perhaps, too, Wagner has flattered and served the multitude too much, to attain to and retain the position of its guide and master; his genius was too much in accord with the crowd. In his colossal polyphony, he sacrificed, more and more,

the individual to the number, whose sovereignty he established without control or counterpoise. It was to push us, and with a terribly strong hand, to the edge of an abyss over which we lean, dangerously ;— if we are to be saved, it is full time that other hands came to our rescue. Remember Amiel's definitions : " Music depersonalised— omnigenous " ; a warning that, even in music, number should never rule and dominate alone, in that so it establishes a reign of danger, which results in the death of plurality itself. And thus it is that the music of Wagner, more socio-logical than all others in its intention and pretension, falls, in fact, far short in its blessing to mankind. Its ideal is not attained, because it compromises the equilibrium which should exist between the two principles, equally necessary to all social life ; of the collective and the personal.

Where then shall we find this equilibrium, or to what master, as we close this study, may we turn for the fulfillment of the ideal ? To the Beethoven of the Nine Symphonies. As ever, so from our present point of view, he is the greatest : there is no higher social teaching than his ; no more admirable model of perfect harmony, between the individual and the many—between the privileges and the duties of the multitude. Every work of Beethoven represents an incom-

parable society because it represents an incomparable hierarchy. Bossuet has said : " If there is an art of governing well, there is also one of obeying well ; " — a knowledge by which one commands, but also one which instructs subjects, to render themselves worthy instruments of a superior guide. " It is," he adds, " the relation between these two arts, this correspondence between the head and its members, which sustains the body of the state." Now a sonata or symphony of Beethoven is a true representation, a sound-image of this correspondence and relation ; of this economy and proportion, — this equilibrium between the corporate head and its subordinate members.

No master of the art of music has exalted individual form and force more than Beethoven, be it of melody, rhythm or of notes alone ; but his individualities are liberal and beneficent, rather than egotistic and tyrannical. What, for instance, is suggested by the theme, in the first measures of the " *Eroica*," but the proposition of a high end and object, to crown this association, called a symphony ? Under the direction of the sovereign theme, all the elements tend towards the Finale ; if, here and there, voices wander, they are soon led back, and if even, now and again, we must wait and hope for them, it is never in

vain. In a moment of liberty, fantasy or caprice, — recall, for instance, the false entrance of the horn, in the first movement of the “Eroica”— all may seem lost, but in glad fact, all is saved, for the caprice is always a happy one, the fantasy, obedient, and the liberty, disciplined and submissive.

Listen to the introduction of his symphony in “A,” if you would comprehend what force and social virtue Beethoven could embody in one single note. Ten measures before the vivace, the dominant “E,” unexpectedly detaches itself from the whole. Once and again, it challenges an “E-major” harmony, creating thus, a first association, but this is not long in dissolving. During six measures, then, the “E” sounds out solitary, and, because the tempo is slow, its tonal impression is attenuated and finally becomes effaced. Still the note persists, at different heights, in divers timbres, it creates its own echo. We follow it no longer, are at a loss to know what system of sounds it would please itself to found, when, suddenly, it repeats itself vigorously in an unexpected harmony; a new aggregation is created, and after the chord of “E” we hear that of “A.” But now, as before, the chords are presided over by a like commanding tone, and thus two successive groups

have proceeded from and are dependent upon the same unity.

It would be a light task to show how Beethoven's work everywhere, in rhythm and melody, possesses the virtue, which we have followed in the history of this note. His every composition is one and yet multiple; all is personal in it, and, again, all is mutual, and therefore it is that he is the master of masters. He proclaims and applies as well, the two equally necessary laws of the higher social life. He teaches us, not only with whom, but under whose rule we must live; he proposes to us the double ideal of a universal coalition and a sovereign authority.

How may we misunderstand or despise the sociological virtue of music, when such lessons cry out to us from her harmonies? Let men bless her, in that she moves and consoles; in that she instructs and lights the way, not only of the soul, but of the mind. Let all those whom she loves, they who bear her mark upon their foreheads, make it the effort of their lives to turn her life-giving rays upon the minds, as well as upon the souls of the multitude. "Oh thou great consoler!" cries one of George Sand's heroes to music:—Under the no less sacred title of "Educator," we may invoke her to-day. May those who suffer be less unhappy through her kindly

teachings, may the ignorant and those astray, be led by her, into wisdom's paths, and may Apollo, once more, as in the days of Pindar, flood all hearts, with the "peaceable love of law." *Æstheticism*, "as Flaubert so wisely says, "is only a superior justice ;" and, in truth, art, and especially the art of music, teaches us as deep lessons in justice, as does charity herself. It is this ideal of a superior justice, that the genius of Beethoven realises, the ideal of an order and a hierarchy; that of a better society than our own, which should reconcile the paradox—perhaps, alas, irreconcilable — which exists between the principle of the many and that of the individual.

I remember walking, one beautiful autumn day, in a country side of Normandy. At a turning in the secluded path, a vast horizon was suddenly disclosed to view, showing forests upon forests, till the eye lost its power of sight into the far distance. Away upon the other side of the plain stretched the sombre avenues, down, till the purple shadows seemed to blend with the sky. But, a little in advance of the first line of forest verdure, a cluster of great beech trees rose solitary, — separate from the innumerable multitude beyond, and, yet, of it; standing sentinel, as it were, protectors and sovereign. So beauty, individual and collective, accorded in nature's har-

mony. Only that morning I had been reading a symphony of Beethoven and now, suddenly, I was seized with a realisation of the profound conformity between nature and art. Fresh from a study of Beethoven, and with my eyes resting on such a scene, I understood how genius could find in creation, the divine patron of its work, and how, in society, as in a symphony or a landscape, the forest must not absorb the trees, nor the trees hide from view the forest.

REALISM AND IDEALISM IN MUSIC.

To M. FERDINAND BRUNETIÈRE.

REALISM AND IDEALISM IN MUSIC.

TOO many lovers of music, forgetting the reverent esteem, which is its due, find in the art only the satisfaction of their taste or passion ; too often they who love it most, know nothing more than love for it, and love, alone, is not sufficient and is not just. A position in the order of the intelligence akin to that which it occupies in the order of the sensibilities would be a more righteous gift to the art of music and more profitable to ourselves. Like her sister muses, she pushes her roots to the very depths of our understanding, and, rather than cut these, we should cultivate and, if need be, strengthen them. To this intent, nothing could be a greater assistance, than the illumination of music, by certain fixed principles,—the assaying of it, as it were, and the testing, by charging it, with the great currents of the mind. We have already considered music from a social or sociological point of view ; let us endeavour, now, to discover how two great, universal elements or principles combine to dominate the art : I mean idealism and

realism, or—if the school terms frighten—the ideal and the real.

Need we define the words, or do they explain themselves? As M. Brunetière once observed, and, as it chanced, he was speaking of idealism,—“some definitions cannot be too narrow in their detail, while there are others, which it is well to,—which, indeed, we must—leave irresolute and uncertain in their terms.” Here we need only those definitions, whose outlines are the most flexible; for realism in music may mean, as we have already seen, all that is most vulgar and trivial in the art,—the sensual and physical alone; but, again, realism in its deeper and greater sense may be the essential relation,—without which there can be no art,—between music and truth. And so idealism in music appears in one guise or another. An idealist in its mathematical and metaphysical nature, the art loses none of this quality in its expression; nor above all, in its possession of an element, to which we find no analogy elsewhere,—that unique force, the musical idea. And finally music is an idealist, in her object, and which is an appeal to consciousness and is therefore ideal; this ideal, being nothing more than the seat of sentiment or the soul,—the most real of all realities,—we perceive in what a perfect

circle music consummates the equitable division and necessary transaction, between the double need and the double nature of humanity.

I.

It is only too true, that music can be realistic, and I mean in the sense of all that is trivial and vulgar. This acceptation of the word is, unfortunately, quite legitimate ; a certain realism being nothing more than the manifestation,— often the glorification, of that which is most external and superficial,— most mediocre and most contemptible in the material world. And music knows how to interpret all this ; throwing things, in their most common aspect,— even the grossest of things — into a strong, crude light, the envelope and, as it were, the coarse bark, which clothes, but deforms them. Thus music, like literature, has its secondary, even its low forms, to be found in many a melodrama, vaudeville or worse ; till, in scores of refrains taken from operettas and sung in “ *café-concerts*,” we should hesitate to decide which is the more ignoble, air or words. The same situation or the same personage,— nay, the same action may inspire the most exquisite or the most trivial

music. Strangely unlike are the “Postilion songs” of Schubert and of M. Lecocq; one and another “Bridal-song” from the operettas once in vogue, resemble but very faintly the “Epithalamium” of “Lohengrin” and, even in the realm of dance music, we know how delicious are some waltzes, while others are so pitifully vulgar. The great art is associated with our noblest emotions, and, alas, — with our most mediocre pleasures; songs are written for the Church, the Conservatory and the field of battle, — but also for the circus and the “café-chantants”: to the strains of music, man dreams and weeps, he thinks and prays, but no less to musical rhythms do animals dance and horses — even wooden horses revolve. No art is more accessible, — more at the beck and call of the vulgar; belonging to all, she can suffer through all, and this is the reverse side, — the sad penalty of her beauty and social virtue. What she does for man, he turns to her destruction, rendering her evil for good; she elevates him, but he degrades her, and the crimes of the multitude, like their great deeds, accomplish themselves, to the strains of a song.

Another great cause of the abasement and vulgarity of music, is the necessity for interpretation; this, and the drama being, indeed, the only arts which needs must submit to this

ordeal. Gounod said, with much reason : "A masterpiece may need only to be interpreted, to be condemned." And the masterpieces of music are those most exposed to this curse ; sensitive and vulnerable at all points, it is they which suffer the most from an army of interpreters. Recall the "Teatro alla moda," dedicated, in his irony, by Marcello ; "to singers of both sexes, directors, instrumentalists, mechanics, painters, buffoons, costumers, pages, supernumeraries, prompters, copyists, guardians and mothers of the actresses and other persons attached to the theatre." This crowd of supernumeraries is as necessary to-day as formerly, — perhaps more so — to that most complex of art-works, the opera : is it to be wondered at if the ideal becomes degraded in these numerous associations with realism and loses its bloom ; or if the flame is, now and again, extinguished in its passage from hand to hand ?

But independently of all interpretation, music may be realistic, in this sense of the word, — in and of itself alone. Composed of ignoble forms, it can only express thoughts and sentiments, deprived of all elevation and dignity ; now the rhythm will be vulgar and now the melody, — the harmony or merely the timbre itself.

For who has not felt that faculty of the timbre,

—the sound-colour, of touching all shades of sensation, from supreme nobility, to the lowest triviality? Among words themselves and the very sound of the names of things, there is a chosen aristocracy; and, again, a common, almost ignoble crowd. Quite the same differences exist, in voices and instruments, and every orchestra is a hierarchy.

Hegel distinguishes between two categories or families of instruments, unequal in number and in dignity, according to the linear and superficial configuration of the sound-body: now a column of air or a vibrating chord, again a parchment-covered surface, or a bell of metal or of glass: and he goes on to observe with truth, that, “the linear direction dominates and produces the true musical instruments.” He thought, too, that he could perceive, “a secret sympathy between these inmost sentiments of the soul, and linear instruments,—a sympathy which requires the expression of simple, profound sentiments, in simple vibrations, of length only, rather than upon a complex, rounded surface.” It is true that such classifications cannot be accepted as absolute;—Beethoven elicited extraordinary effects of depth and simplicity from the kettledrum, an instrument which is all surface;—instruments, in truth, are of as great or little worth, as is the musician who employs them, and

the vulgar cornet, was promoted by Meyerbeer, in the final trio of "Robert le Diable," to a dignity, of which it had never been supposed capable. Nevertheless these are exceptions,—special favours, as it were, which do not reverse the general order ; — that natural hierarchy, which, again, without insisting upon, we would, at least suggest.

And harmony, as well as timbre, introduces into music, an element of nobility and the ideal, or of vulgarity and flat reality. It is harmony, or, to be more exact, the substitution of the chord of 'G'-minor, for that of 'B'-flat, which lends such a profound accent of melancholy to the final repetition of Cherubino's "Voi che sapete"; and modify but a single note of the exquisite harmony, which just precedes the first words of Lohengrin, change the chord of 'F'-sharp minor into that of 'D'-major, and listen how the charm is broken and how the mystery, which envelops the divine knight, is vanished.

And who needs to be told of the power for good or bad, which lies with a special force, within the province of melody? To decide whether a certain melody works for either good or evil, is easy, but to demonstrate it, is more difficult; while nothing is more simple than to change a beautiful melody into something trivial

and vulgar,—a single altered note will suffice. Singers, who perhaps know this best, would often lead us to suppose their ignorance ; the most exquisite notes of even a Mozart, are not sacred to them, and with their ornaments and transpositions, they spare no outrage to those lines, which are, or should be, as intangible, as the verses of Racine, or the drawings of Raphael. The greatest among the interpreters of “*Don Juan*” and “*The Marriage of Figaro*” are not innocent of such profanations.

And, finally, the rhythm and the movement or “tempo,” possess a force of singular efficacy in the elevation of, or in the decadence of music, for the relations of time between the notes, are of no less importance than those of space. Rhythm constitutes, in music, the agent and principal factor of caricature,—that degradation of the ideal. It is quite easy to reduce the austerest masterpiece to a quadrille ; a master of the piano, M. Delaborde, amusing himself, after this manner, with some of the fugues in “*The Well-tempered Clavichord*,” used the rhythm as his principal accomplice. All rhythm need not, therefore, be trivial, but there exists little trivial music which is not strongly, even brutally, rhythmical. All this,—vulgarity of rhythm, of melody and of timbre, not to mention that of words,—in fact

all the gross elements and low realism with which music is capable of being profaned, are to be met with, far too often, in the répertoires of the light-opera stage and in the “café-chantants.” For it is only too true, that certain of us always, and all of us at certain times, find pleasure in such music, and what it awakens within us. I must confess, with M. Brunetière, that “I never come away from a “café -chantant,” or the representation of an operetta, without a certain humiliation, and a sense of shame in the kind of pleasure which I have just experienced.”¹

II.

In a second acceptation of the word, music may be said to be realistic, in its relations to the realm of the senses ; to all that is sensible or sensual, akin, in a word, to the physical realities ; to the nature of musical art,—in its foibles and its wanderings, sometimes even in its beauty.

The physiological action of music, is far superior to that of the other arts. It is the only art to which animals are sensitive, the only one which invites and even constrains men to movement : to the march and dance, and the regular balancing of one or the other portion of the body. And

¹ “La Renaissance de l’ idéalisme,” by M. F. Brunetière.

still more than in merely mechanical directions, music exercises a prodigious power, in its effect upon the nerves. There are persons, who can be made to suffer cruelly by the sound of certain instruments. Mozart, when a child, would almost faint at the blare of a trumpet ; and it is nothing more than a physical pleasure which we experience, in certain exceptional, puissant notes in the human voice ; as the C-sharp of a tenor or a soprano's "contra fa." That music is inferior, which confines itself to producing sensations ; and when sound excites within us, only a physical action, it pleases us so far and no farther than it pleases animals, and men, who content themselves with animal impressions. "Saltantes Satyros imitabitur Alphesibœus." Those accorded sounds, which speak only to the ear constitute a music deprived of signification and value.

Such is the case in certain Italian music, — and its vice ; — in all Italian music, the world of to-day says, but too glibly, and in a spirit of contempt or of calumny, rather. When, at the end of the eighteenth century, Italian art fell into brilliant, empty sensuality, it fell from great heights, whose summits had long guarded the purest idealism ; for the music of Italy, idealistic at its dawn, was no less so when its sun reached the meridian. In her churches, the im-

material polyphonies of Palestrina were voiced by invisible choruses in which souls alone seemed to sing. Even the music of the theatre, was born of a Platonistic academy of Florence, founded and presided over by Giovanni Bardi, Conte di Vernio : and nothing can be less realistic, than the monodic reform and the opera, such as the first Florentine masters conceived it to be. The æsthetic treatises of the time, speak of nothing but the idea or the ideal : and theorists and philosophers, as artists then were,—such as Vincenzo Galileo and Caccini,—in their admiration and imitation of antiquity, strove to reduce the power of sensation in music. They sought for, and dreamed of an art, as rich in idea and spirit, as it should be sober in matter and method. Caccini in his “*Nuove Musiche*,” defined music as “an image resembling those intangible, celestial harmonies, whence fall so many blessings upon the earth,” and, when he resolves it into elements, the intellectual,—that is the libretto of the composition—is placed by him in the first rank ; in the second, rhythm and sound, and the element of feeling in the last. Some one hundred and fifty years later the illustrious composer of the “*Psalms*,” has no thought of contradicting the author of the “*Nuove Musiche*”; and it is not the first of the aims, which he proposes to music,

"appagare l'orecchio, muovere il cor, e recreare lo spirito," which Marcello holds to be the most glorious.

But the eighteenth century, dying, overthrew the noble hierarchy, established by the great masters ; and the sound,—the note, as deadly often as the letter, got the better of the spirit. Rossini appeared and reigned ; all was sacrificed to sensation, and in the complex phenomena of musical pleasure, the ancient order was reversed. "Appagare l'orecchio" the titillating of the ear, became and, for a long time remained, the principal object of music. Stendhal, that perfect representative of Italian dilettantism, at the beginning of our century, wrote a life of Rossini, from which there can be extracted a complete theory of a sensual æstheticism, in absolute contradiction to the conception of Marcello and Caccini, as to the beautiful in art. When Stendhal speaking of — I know not what cavatina, from "Italiana in Algeri," sighs voluptuously : "it is the most physical music I know," he is rendering to music the highest praise, which he is capable of imagining.

At that time Germany knew no such decadence ; during two centuries, from Schütz to Schumann, not one of her great men, — to her good fortune, turned the light of his austere and profound genius, from the inner to the outer life, from

the soul to the senses. It was not until later, that she encountered midway along the path of our century, that extraordinary man, who should equally respond to and contradict that genius of the ideal. For it is, in truth, in Wagner, profound idealist, though we know him to be, that we find a greater realist than German music has ever known. In the musician of Bayreuth, the element of feeling in musical enjoyment has acquired proportions, which have been, hitherto, unheard of and are, perhaps, extravagant. Wagner, in the first place, has endeavoured to make of a work of art, a masterpiece of all the arts, appealing at once, to all the senses; a combination, or a concert of divers sensations, reinforced, the one by the other. Nor is this all; he has singularly developed sensualism from music, and from music unassisted. Like Berlioz, and in a greater degree than he, Wagner was a virtuoso of the orchestra, a sovereign master of sonorities and of timbres; and, without doubt, there is something more material or less ideal, in timbre, which is colour in sound, than in harmony, and, above all, in melody, which is the design and linear motion of sonority. It is not to be denied, that Wagner exercises a stronger, more violent hold upon us to-day, than does Bach, or Mozart; but if he often takes our heart by

storm, how often, too, must we confess it to be only a physical tempest ! And with what a fearful force have we been shaken ; into what breathless agony and spasmodic transports, has he thrown us ! All the powers of nature have been conjured up, to compose his irresistible orchestra : the earth has been disemboweled of her metals, and has delivered up of the wood of all her forests ; all matter has furnished the arms, where-with we shall be so rudely assaulted. The spirit, even of art, is transformed ; not the rigorous rhythm of other times, but a new, continuous, floating rhythm, envelops and enlaces us. The delicate, continuous chromatics of the melody tenderly caress our flesh,—when they are not scorching and tearing it ; now they sting us and again they kiss. Oh ! How light it was, that sensualism of Italy, as light as breath, compared to that of Germany. What was it but the flattery of a sweet refrain upon the ear, compared with these furious thrusts and grasps, with which the Wagnerian polyphonies shake our whole being ? Truly, those were frivolous, sensual joys, which the contemporaries of Stendhal went to seek in the halls of San Carlo and of La Scala, but they were joys ; what stage has seen more tears than that of the sombre theatre at Bayreuth ; or has heard more

heart-rendering sobs? And which must we name the asylum, or the temple of all the manifestations of admiration and of ecstasy, of the grimaces and convulsions of delirium and folly?

We should never disassociate the two elements or poles, which constitute by their contrast,—their contradiction, as it were, the double genius of Wagner. The unjust,—or, at best, only partially just, author of "Degeneration," has erred in seeing only one of these elements, but that one, he has seen to its depths. No one has denounced more clearly, "the lamentations, yelpings, and amorous furies of 'Tristan and Isolde' . . . the exalted accents of an insatiable, burning sensuality, those groans, cries and collapses, so affected by Wagner." Again the writer complains that "in Wagner's pictures, amorous excitement always clothes the form of a furious folly."—I would take exception to the one word—"always." It is false that Wagnerian love is always eroticism; it is often heroism, renunciation, sacrifice, and the sublime gift of self. We cannot forgive M. Nordau his forgetfulness of the pure Elsa, the generous Brunhilde and, above all, of the angelic Elizabeth, in his spleen against the frenetic Isolde. But the rights of idealism, in Wagner's art, having been recognised, sensualism still stands her ground. Never

perhaps, have these rights affirmed themselves more strongly than in the rôle of Elizabeth,—and no work can be considered more truly representative of Wagner than “*Tannhäuser*,” because nowhere else, is the encounter and conflict between angel and brute, between matter and spirit, so tragic.

And yet I am not certain that the advantage,—the æsthetic advantage—does not rest, in this case, with the brute, nor that the evil in “*Tannhäuser*” is not clothed with a greater beauty, than is the good. At least it possesses a power and realism never before attained. “*Armide*,” “*Don Juan*,” “*Faust*,”—all the music of love, however voluptuous, pales and melts away, in the heat of the flames from this hell-brazier! But half-exposed in the overture, dispersed and thinned in the “*Bacchanale*” of the first picture, it is in the last act that all the elements,—all the impure forces of sound, unite to break force in terrible concert. With such a burst of fury, that, in our memories at least, nature and matter continue to balance equally, even to check the spirituality and the grace, which, in the close of the drama itself, actually triumph. The music would seem to have let loose all the violent forces of “*Venus, fastened upon her prey*”; and with what a fearful, indissoluble grasp! How the first tenor notes:

"Dahin zog's mich, wo ich der Wonn und Lust so viel genoss" pierce our hearts, above the tremolos of the accompaniment! Wagner spares us no delirium nor torture; he carries all to the extreme, languor to annihilation, excitement to frenzy. He constrains all the elements and agents of sound to serve his design, or, we may say, his ideal of voluptuousness and luxury: the rhythm, which he enervates, the melody which he teases with chromatics, even the sonority of the instruments,—of the altos, for instance, which he pushes into their very last intrenchments. Thus in these extraordinary pages, all is physical representation; sounds speak neither to nor of the soul; the brute and the brute alone, triumphs gloriously, till we see, as never before, what a part music can sustain, what a prestige and splendour she can give, to the realities of sense, of flesh and blood.

But though music is realistic, in a sense that may mean the trivial and sensual, it is realistic too, and legitimately so from the fact that it is in a necessarily close relation to reality; and that this realism, is only a higher form of musical idealism, must be the conclusion of this study. Before reaching that definite end, however, we must discover what elements of the ideal meet in the nature and conditions of music.

III.

Music is ideal by virtue of the sense to which it addresses itself. Doubtless the ear has its own peculiar delights, but they are not the most material, nor the most exclusively physical of pleasures ; without considering the three senses,— taste, smell, and touch, which are embodied in no art, who can deny that there is more sensualism possible in form or colour, than in sound,— in what one sees, than in what one hears ? It is painting and sculpture,— not music, which have their secret exhibitions ; no immoral music can exist, without the determining force of word or gesture ; and, even when accentuated by words, music is chaste compared with painting. A certain situation in “*Esclarmonde*” may form the subject of a symphonic entre-acte, but not of a picture. Receptive agent of language,— or thought,— the sense of hearing, seems to gain dignity from its high use ; more than one great event renders testimony to this ideal superiority. The Lord allowed Himself to be heard by Moses, from the flaming bush, but might not be seen ; and it was not with his ear, but with his more easily tempted eyes that Job made a compact. Nor did Jesus say, when He was among men : “Blessed are those who behold Me !” But : “Blessed are they who hear the word of God ! Blessed are

those who have not seen and yet have believed ! " He called Himself the Word, and it is to the ear that the word addresses itself.

Music appeals to the noblest of our senses, and appeals to it alone. Hearing, in its perception of a musical work, is more sufficient unto itself, than is sight in the contemplation of any work, be it painting, sculpture, or architectural design. Whether in imagination or reality, the sense of touch, is instinctively interested in any sight of the eyes, in the substance even of plastic form, statue, bas-relief or column. How commonly we describe personages or objects represented in painting, as so real that they might almost be touched ! How fondly do we lay caressing fingers, on the marble capitals of the Propylæa or of the Parthenon. And again we read how Michael Angelo in his old age, loved to pass his trembling hands over some antique corso of the Vatican. The ordinary " visitors are requested not to handle," has no other object than to prevent the instinctive, though indiscreet, desire to satisfy this complementary sensation ; but, in music, sensation is rigorously confined to one of our senses ; invisible and impalpable, it can only be heard, and therein lies, to its honour, in comparison with the other arts, a claim to the minimum of sensualism or of sensuality.

But, to go a little farther, music can dispense, to a certain extent, with even this unique sensation; for it can live in a mute existence, that is independent of the sense, which it specially affects.—The greatest of musicians was deaf; when deaf, created his most magnificent works; and so, too, one who is deprived of the sense of hearing may read his symphonies, not failing altogether to comprehend and enjoy them. And although the loss of hearing diminishes cruelly the musical faculties, it does not kill them; while on the contrary, we cannot easily imagine a blind painter, sculptor or architect, or that a blind man could feel a picture or a statue or an edifice; and not only could he not feel them, but in reality he could know nothing, or almost nothing of them. If, to-day I lose my sight, how much shall I learn from descriptions and analyses, of the plastic masterpieces of to-morrow? I may know the subject, which is but little, and, according to the common but profound expression of the day,—shall be able to “get but a very poor idea of it.” While, on the contrary, the reading alone, of musical works, which I have never heard, and may never hear, reveals to me their “idea,” for a lifelong possession. While the painter or the sculptor can produce nothing without colour or clay, without

light or relief, the musician can even dispense with sound ; in perfect silence, a pen and a few leaves of paper, which form no smallest part of the real material of his work, suffice for the transference of his thought ; and written only,—before it bursts into sound, the creation exists, possessing, already, at least a beginning of being. Quite aside from the sense of hearing, a musical composition lives in the artist, its creator, and in us, for whom it exists. If then, the idea of painting, sculpture or architecture may only realise and manifest itself to us, through the one sense which is proper to it, and if, on the contrary, music is most capable of freeing herself from such trammels, is not this a sign and new proof, that the idealism of this art is superior to that of the others ?

But music is idealistic through nature as well as through the sense, to which she expressly addresses herself ; ideal in her mathematical as well as in her metaphysical nature.

Leibnitz defined music as, “*Exercitium arithmeticæ occultum nescientis se numerare animi* ;” and the greatest savans, from Pythagoras to d’ Alembert, have ever suspected the existence of this unconscious and secret exercise, which mystery it was left to Helmholtz in these latter days to penetrate and unveil. The illustrious

physician of Heidelberg, has determined the relations and thrown a bridge, as it were, from acoustics across to music: "I have always felt myself drawn," he says, "by the mysterious union between mathematics and music; attracted by the application of the most abstract and logical of all the sciences to the study of sound;—to the physical and physiological bases of music, the most immaterial, the most ephemeral, the most delicate of all the arts, and that which awakens in us the most indefinable and the most incalculable sensations. The fundamental basis in music is the result of an application of mathematical rules; and in all musical intervals, in the scale, etc., relations of numbers, even logarithms, play an important part. There is an intimate connection between those two methods, which would seem the most opposed imaginable,—mathematics and music; they render one another a mutual assistance as though to prove the sympathy which appears through all the manifestations of our intellect, and awakens within us the suspicion, even in the works of artistic genius, of the secret action of a reasoning intelligence."¹

Melody, harmony, rhythm,—all in music, is number and the proportions of number. All,

¹ "Causes physiologiques de l' harmonie musicale."

even to timbre itself, which,—as Helmholtz, again, has demonstrated,—“exists, in the presence, the number and the variable intensity, of the harmonic sounds, which accompany the fundamental sound.”¹ Thus, much of the quality of music, as of architecture, is spiritual; mathematical laws rule it imperiously, and these laws constitute the supreme order of the ideal, and the abstract purity of an order, which reason alone conceives.

From a metaphysical point of view, music is idealistic, in that it is an art of time rather than of space; of these two ideas, that of time seems to possess far more of the ideal and of the immaterial.

It is evident too, that music bears much less narrow and essential relations to space, than do any of the plastic arts. A note is “high” or “low,” by a convention, which conforms to the impression of language and writing; and, in reality, music only depends upon space for the vibrations of air, which is much less material, than the solid and palpable matter of the other arts. It is in time, rather than in space, that music exists,—the divisions of time being one of its greatest elements of being and beauty,—

¹“Le Son et la Musique,” by P. Blaserna, professor at the University of Rome.

in a sort, the stuff of which rhythm and measure are formed. It is the connecting link of melody, which without it, would be lost at the passage of each note : and, finally, as has been recently observed by a psychological student of music, swiftness is an element of the art, and “swiftness is only indirectly a function of space ; directly and immediately it is a function of time.”¹

Now it is possible to perceive, or obscurely feel something more impersonal and more ideal in the thought of time, than in that of space. It will be objected, that even as we owe our idea of space to the perception, by our senses, of objects in perspective, so we acquire an idea of time, by the equally sensible perception of phenomena in the duration of sound. It is by agreeable or unpleasant sensations,—it is by his joys and, above all, alas—by his sorrows, that man counts the years, days and even the hours. And so far, in these two categories of the understanding the part borne by sensation is equal. . . . And yet we cannot but feel that time is farther removed from the material than is space. “Not only,” writes an eminent master of æsthetics, “not only does reason conceive time to be immaterial, but when our imagination endeavours

¹ L’Émotion musicale, by M. Lionel Dauriac. (Revue Philosophique of July and August, 1896.)

to picture it, we can only attribute to it extent, a quality of but one dimension." Bodies and bodies only are in necessary relation with space; neither thought nor sentiment have anything in common with it. It is impossible to conceive of bodies without the idea of space also, but in thought there is no such condition, and by virtue of this tendency we come to regard space as the domain of matter, and time as that of the spirit.

In any case, music is more truly spiritual than the other arts, in the realms both of space and time. Barely possessing the quality of extent, sounds do not persist in their durability as do plastic forms: "instead of allowing the sensible element by which it expresses itself, to develop, as do the symbolic arts; instead of giving that element a permanency, music annihilates form, refusing it an independent and enduring existence, in competition with the thought, which she expresses and with the workings of the mind to which she addresses herself."¹

In the silence of the night, upon the rock of the Acropolis, on the plain of Pæstum, or along the quiet galleries of the Louvre or the Vatican, the immortal marbles live; a life mysterious and unwitnessed, and, yet life; but when the last resonances of its final chord have died away, the

¹ *Esthétique*, by Hegel. (Translated by Benard.)

most beautiful symphony returns to nothingness. It exists no longer, or, at best, possesses but a virtual, latent existence, which may, indeed, be awakened, but which sleeps as though in death. And thus, even in its proper realm of duration, music retains something of the fugitive and volatile ; a something less material than the other arts, — less sensible, or less constantly so.

IV.

Another element, and perhaps the most pronounced, of musical idealism, is the existence, so universally recognised, of what are called musical ideas. For this muse is the begetter of thought images which live, and, indeed can only live in her ideas of melody, chord and rhythm ; ideal because they are, as completely as it is possible to be, denuded of and withdrawn from every subject which is not musical, and therefore alien. This idealism is the specific property of music ; unless, we admit that architecture, participates in its possession, to a measured degree. An architectural idea, does, indeed, approach a musical thought ; in this respect — a line of stone or of marble, may be compared to a line of sound, — for a temple, a cathedral or a palace is, in its way, and, a little after the fashion of a symphony, — the develop-

ment of an idea ; this idea being, according to the special instance, the column, the semicircle, the cupola or the pointed arch. But along this line of thought the superiority of music moves supreme and how far do the ideas of a Beethoven, in their variety and detail, — above all, in their humanity, movement and life, outshine those of a Bramonte or a Michael Angelo ! Even in considering the object, merely, for which an architectural masterpiece has been erected, or only its name of palace, cathedral or theatre ; something, immediately, of the concrete and practical, is introduced, by which pure idealism finds itself attainted, though never so slightly.

And in painting or sculpture, this alteration goes still deeper. There are musical ideas, which find no parallel in the sculptured or the painted image : there is, for instance, higher, sweeter music which we call "pure," but there is no such thing as "pure" painting or sculpture. The human or brute physiognomy, a landscape, an historical event, or some incident in everyday life ; — plastic art ever represents some one thing, object or personage, and can only exist in representation. "Shall it be a god, a table, or a wash basin ?" soliloquises the sculptor, but the true musician, alone of all artists has nothing of the like to ask. He neither seeks nor chooses a

subject, or, rather, only desires one which is purely musical ; he merely questions : " Shall it be fugue, sonata, concerto, or symphony ? " While a picture of Raphael shows us a woman, holding in her arms a child, or while on a frieze of the Parthenon a sacred procession defiles before our eyes, the subject of the first measures of the symphony in C-minor is: sol, sol, sol, mi, and nothing more. In painting and sculpture the idea represented and its representation remains distinct the one from the other ; in music they blend.

Must we then conclude that the musical idea containing nothing and expressing nothing outside of itself, can have no intimate relation with our feeling or intelligence ? Indeed no ! Music is no such isolated, egoistic, sterile stranger to our thoughts ; she lacks neither thought nor passion, and the musical ideas of a Beethoven, even though they are the sol sol sol mi of the C-minor symphony, are far more than vain arabesques of sound.

But what are they then, these musical ideas ? what do they express, and why can they not, as may a painting, statue, drama or comedy, announce themselves in speech ? For the simple reason, that the pure function of the musical idea is to be musical, something expressible in sounds only, and not in words. And, indeed, what words

can translate the idea, as a whole ; can tell the high ideal of any masterpiece of art, be it painting, statue or edifice ? If words could say what " *La Gioconda*," the " *Venus of Milos*," or the Parthenon whisper in our ear, then the Parthenon, the " *Venus of Milos* " and " *La Gioconda* " would serve no purpose in the world, and would cease to exist. And so, as the message borne by sound is deeper and far more mysterious, than is the mission of form and colour, and as the musical idea is more specific, so, in proportion, is the language of words inadequate.

But let us beware of concluding that these ideas born of music are narrow ; on the contrary there are none more vast, more general, or which better attest the " power of abstraction and the secret efficacy of the human mind."¹ In the first place there are none which follow more closely, order and logic, proportions and number ; and, again, if we empty the word " idea," of something of its intellectual and rational sense, to fill it with a passionate and sentimental signification, then the domain of the musical idea, opens and spreads itself to infinity. It expresses our whole soul ; nay, seems, itself, to be our soul, and this new form of musical idealism, — the idealism of

¹ " Des rapports de la musique et de la poésie," by M. Jules Combarieu.

music through its object,—is to us the very centre and core of our present study.

V.

The mission, then, of music is to represent beings, rather than things. Beings, did I say? Rather does it represent being,—that which exists within and of itself. More than one philosopher has recognised and glorified the metaphysical power and beauty of the musical art. “Music,” says Schopenhauer, “carries us to the very hidden depths of the sentiment expressed by the words of the opera and represented upon the stage; unveiling the individual and true nature of the composition, it discovers to us the soul of events and facts.”

And the great idealist, Carlyle, in his “Heroes and Hero worship,” defines musical thought, from a metaphysical point of view, as “spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the *Melody* that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists, and has a right to be here in this world. All inmost things we may say are melodious, naturally utter themselves in song. The measuring of song goes deep. who is there

that in logical words, can express the effect music has on us? A kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech which leads us to the edge of the Infinite, and lets us for moments gaze into that!"

But we may not conclude, from this secret efficacy of music, that it is indifferent to the things and facts of the outer world. To say that Meyerbeer was a great historical musician, means that great events and great epochs, find, in the master of "*Les Huguenots*," and of "*Le Prophète*," an interpreter of as large a measure as his themes: and the smallest acts, the minutest incidents and details of everyday adventure, — in a word, the habit and the beaten path of life, may furnish matter for a musical work. — There was nothing, to the very tables and chairs of the household furniture, the voices of which, Auber did not boast of having set to music. The greatest masterpieces doubtless are profound, but many an one, too, is light, not to say frivolous; — masterpieces of an exterior and superficial, and yet real life, such as "*Le Mariage secret*," or the "*Barber of Seville*." And in others the very action and movement of life is involved at times in their complete beauty, as in "*Don Juan*," and, above all, in the marvellous Finale of "*Figaro*."

Music accords a place to and recognises the rights of things ; that is to say of nature, rather than of facts ; and these rights should be defined exactly, that nothing be taken from them, and that nothing, also, be added to them. Never, perhaps, have the relations between nature and music been less understood, than by that poet of nature, who called himself a musician, — Victor de Laprade. The theme or the general thesis of his book, “*Contre la musique*,” concerns nothing but the assimilation of music to the external world ; and, from this assimilation, falsely established, De Laprade concludes only what is unfavourable to music, only that which debases and humiliates it. “*Music*,” says he, “is that art which participates most fully in the external life, which touches most nearly those elements foreign to the soul, because pure intelligence, reason, and the moral sense are incapable of judging of it.” And again : “*music*, so powerful in its influence on the heart of man, takes form and shape, in the external world, entirely, outside of the domain of our will ; like some storm, which, gathering far away in space, comes at last, to break over our heads.” Or still again, “*This art, whose effects are as irresistible as those of magnetism or electricity, is that which presupposes in the artist least liberty of mind*

and moral clairvoyance ; that which produces the most fateful and lasting effects ; by virtue of its laws, which are so mechanical that they crystallise into an aggregation or a dissolution of the substance as though in an alembic." And finally : "music has not its root, in the moral sense,—that is the conscience, but in natural sentiment." Thus does the poet persist in despoiling music of all intellectual element, denying to it any logical, rational or moral value ;—goes farther, indeed, and accuses it of immorality or rather of amorality, pigeonholing it as the least human of the arts. Far from being born of God, he seems to affirm that this Muse is not even born of the will of man or of the will of the flesh, but of that external world which is alien and inferior to man,—of nature, in fact—and of matter ; and that, like matter, she is without intelligence, without conscience and without liberty.

Such a theory is not only an insult to music, but is false in its conception ; for that art upon which physical nature has the least influence, and of which it forms the smallest part, cannot have its origin in nature alone. Nature is a great architect, a great painter and a great sculptor but not so great a musician ; her sounds are as many, perhaps, as are her varieties of form and colour, and yet we have fewer great symphonies than

masterpieces of painting, sculpture or even of architecture. "Nature is a great architect ; we are awed or charmed by the beauty of her constructions, and the variety of her lines ; curved, straight, horizontal, perpendicular or oblique, continuous or broken, storm-riven or peaceful, severe or softly undulating, each in their turn, they awaken in our minds the idea, either of a gigantic effort, an heroic audacity, an olympian repose, or of a grace which plays with nature's laws in infinite abandon."¹ Man the architect, has only to borrow from the architecture of Creation, reproducing the grand spectacles, which have struck him with wonder. "Mountains will become pyramids, peaks—obelisks, caverns—subterranean labyrinths. He will imitate the vast stretches of the sea, by long horizontal lines ; steep rocks, by towers ; the vault of the sky, in domes ; forests, by a vegetation of columns ; their fugitive perspectives in ranging galleries ; their shaded depths in arcades and moulded arches."² Nor is this all, for even the lesser things of nature are reproduced in the world's greatest edifices. "We see depicted, the leaves of olive-tree and laurel, the thorns of the thistle, the acanthus, water-lily, parsley, and the rose ;

¹ "L'Art et la nature," by M. Victor Cherbuliez.

² Idem, *ibid.*

shells, eggs, pearls, olives and almonds, raindrops, flames and thunderbolts. Again strange foliage bends and twists itself, to obey the rigid lines which imprison it and animals appear, as the tokens of savage nature, conquered by man. The Indian rests the lintel of his house upon the figures of elephants, the Persian utilises for the chapters of his columns, the double-headed bull, and the Greek sends the water of his fountains bursting from the stone muzzle of a lion."¹ Nature is a great sculptor, and a Phidias or a Michael Angelo boasted of no higher art than to fix in marble and reduce to the purest form of nature the living, supple flesh which the Divine Hand had modelled.

"Nature is a wonderful designer and an incomparable colourist. She has made the sky and its clouds; the earth with its rocks and trees, its flowers and beetles, its humming-birds and peacocks. She gives the spring its thousand tints of grey and green; gilds the autumn, and whitens winter with hoary locks,"² and the eyes of painters ache, and sculptors' hands weary, seeking, ever vainly, the infinite beauty which envelops, as a veil, the form of the creature and floats over the face of all creation.

¹ Charles Blanc, quoted by M. Cherbuliez, op. cit.

² M. Cherbuliez, op. cit.

But that nature which offers herself a model to painter, sculptor and architect, lends herself, with less freedom, to the musician ; it is only he who may not copy from her, and who creates nothing, or almost nothing “from nature.” Of all artists, he is the greatest transformer and transposer, for, from the first, he is obliged to transfer all appearances and spectacles of nature, from the domain of sight to that of the ear ; and thus all musical interpretation of the visible universe must, of necessity, be indirect. But the very sonorities of nature are scarcely less difficult of rendering ; and there is more architecture in the colonnades of the forest, more sculpture in a mountain front, more cunning colouring in the wings of a humming-bird, than there is music in the trill of the nightingale, in the echo of caverns, or the murmur of the woods. In a word visible nature is far closer to art than is sonorous nature ; a landscape differs less from the picture than from the symphony which it inspires, and the secrets of Isis may be read upon her face, when no ear can detect them in her voice.

“ Therefore it is that when man aspired to be a musician, he cried to nature, ‘ I presume not to rival thy torrents and thunders, thy blackbirds and crickets,— all the incommensurable forces at thy disposal ; but this, I will endeavour to do.

Our passions are thy handiwork, thou art the giver of them ; but, whether it was by thy desire or whether we usurped thy rights in touching the fruit of the tree of knowledge, we have, at all events, become thinking beings, and this our passions feel. Thought, at once a weakness and a power, has impressed its mark upon them, and, henceforth, thy primal music, which expresses the pure passion of material things, may no longer be a true interpreter of the beatings of our human hearts : it says, ever, too little or too much. I shall translate into the language of men, I shall transpose, I shall comment upon all that thou wouldest say to us, and, henceforth, man shall comprehend that which thou hast refused to explain. As with thee, so with him, all is mysterious ; I will unveil thy mysteries with his.' And having thus spoken, his first care was to humanise sound, in order that the passions of the air should express likewise the storms of the human soul."¹

" To humanise sound," this then must be the mission of music, and has ever been the effort of the great musicians of nature ; to bring again into its proper relation, to subordinate matter to mind, nature to thought ; to translate into melodies, rhythms and chords the impression or the

¹ M. Victor Cherbuliez, op. cit.

reaction of material things upon us, rather than the things themselves ; to place man in the atmosphere of nature that he may participate in her being, and, above all, that he may communicate to her his own. The masterpieces of nature-music, conform the most closely to Amiel's famous definition. It has become trite to refer in this connection to the "Pastoral Symphony," or to the idealistic programme, inscribed by Beethoven upon its first page ; but nearer to our day, "Tannhäuser," offers an admirable example of a like idealism, and of that same hierarchy established between nature and humanity. In the conclusion of the first act, as Tannhäuser curses Venus, and invokes the aid of Mary, the scene changes suddenly, from the grotto of the goddess, and a valley, flowered by spring, greets our grateful eyes. The morning sun, flowers, the valley, springtime, — all nature sings in the fresh tonality of the rustic melody played upon a solitary flute ; in a shepherd's song, young as the shepherd himself, young as the season and the hour. Tannhäuser has not yet made a gesture, but through the whole inanimate scene, he who contemplates it, attracts our attention as we listen for the cry of this motionless and silent spectator, to whom nature seems to be bending a waiting ear. After a moment come the pilgrims, singing on their way to Rome.

At regular intervals the song of the young shepherd, responds to their song, and each one of his responses touches our hearts the more, as though, each moment, a little more emotion, — a little more of soul and of humanity pulsed through the pastoral voice of the wood-instrument. The pilgrims pass on their way, the boy reverently kneeling for a blessing, and then it is that Tannhäuser, falling on his knees, by the wayside, sobs out : "Allmächt' ger, dir sei Preis ! Almighty, praise to thee." By this one stroke and in this single cry, human life and morality, have broken in upon nature ; pardon has rejuvenated and resuscitated a soul, in the very midst of a universe, resuscitated and made young again under the tender touch of spring. The music lends itself marvellously to the image ; not content with expressing, it represents ; a luminous, transcendent scale of tones lifts us from nature to man, from man to God, and with one bound, we pass through every degree of being. Do not mistake : it was nature as well as faith, that sent Tannhäuser to his knees ; not only the sweetness of the canticles, but the mild breath of spring which melted and conquered ; and are not nature and music, then, avenged of the calumnies of a De Laprade ? Is not the existence of idealism in music beyond dispute, if, in such nature-music,

the beauty of material things culminates and resolves itself into a spiritual beauty, as we are transported from the order of physical and natural things, and with glad eyes gaze upon the realm of pure morality, of conscience and of the will?

Thus is man,—the mental and spiritual man, the whole, or nearly the whole theme of music. She does not interest herself in our appearance and personal surroundings; to reach and represent the depths of our being, she has no such need as has the muse of painting or sculpture, of our bodies or our features, of our attitudes and glances, still less of our attire: more of an idealist than poetry herself, she neglects all that which is exterior, all that which is not in itself, thought or sentiment. Remember those lines given to Claire in Beethoven's "Egmont": "Ah! si j'avais un pourpoint, un chapeau!" The libretto alone, makes mention of the soldier-costume which the young girl longs for, that she may follow her hero. The music has no thought for the detail: it is of the heart and not of the cuirasse, which she sings, and as she counts those heart-beats, little does she care in what vesture the body is clothed.

Thus understood, idealism seems the very essence of music, and each of the great musicians, a great idealist. Palestrina was the first in time,

and perhaps too, in what we may be allowed to call, "the inwardness" of genius. Product of a century, which had come to hate nature, for its too lively pulse of love, the Palestrinian art was intimate and profound, sacrificing and subordinating all to the idea, according no rights to the external. Scarcely may that lovely response for Holy Week, shed a furtive gleam of day, across the midnight gloom of Gethsemane, elsewhere, not a ray filters through, not a reflection glimmers: no alien voice dares to trouble the sacred communion of the soul with itself, and with its God. Sensation has no part in this music of prayer, meditation and ecstasy; I know of no religious art, in which the Divine manifests itself, in lighter lines; the material is reduced to a minimum,—to the soft breathings of unseen lips, which no instrument may even accompany.

And again, what an idealist is Sebastian Bach! The external world would seem to have existed, as little for the "Cantor" of Leipzig as for the Roman chapel-master; neither the one nor the other troubled himself with aught but man, and above all, man in relation to God. Was it joy or sorrow, all passion was sacred with Bach. And again, he was an idealist, in the strong abstract and general characteristics of his genius, supremely in his generality: a veritable idealist, he

"knows that nothing is so fitted to lessen the greatness of a subject, as a superabundance of details ; as for accessories, he economised in the use of them, reducing it to the strictest necessity. . . . He puts aside, carefully, all which might weaken the impression which he would make upon us ; in the words of one of our strongest novelists, he does not ' dwell on what is without, but makes it his effort to render visible, that which is within.'"¹

The more intense the sentiment of Bach, the simpler it is ; he expresses emotion in its extent and profoundness,—in the rough, as it were ; with nothing to resolve or refine, or complicate it ; and thus, as it often happens, his music, losing all pathetic and sentimental signification, becomes only intellectual and logical. A Bach fugue, addressed rather to the understanding than to the feeling is made to be comprehended, rather than to be loved ; but, though, only a masterpiece of the mind, it is, still, a masterpiece, and, when, after a lapse of many years, we reread it and find its abstract beauty unshaken by time, we realise that, beside the idealism of sentiment and heart, above these perhaps, there dwells an idealism, less personal and less changeable,—that of pure reason.

¹ M. Victor Cherbuliez, *op. cit.*

Mozart was a great idealist; perhaps his music more often than that of any other master, is qualified as "ideal"; for it often happens that his genius not only surpasses, but transforms the sentiment or personage, which he represents. His "*Figaro*" is the best example of an ideal thus transposed or transfigured. In the two airs of the Comtessa,—in Cherubino's "voi che sapete," the little page of the "day of folly" and his godmother sing harmonious emotions quite alien to their souls; and the music under the swaying trees, breathes a mysterious languor which never could have throbbed through the heart of gay Susanna.

How the melodies of Mozart overflow the limits of words, and of situation! With what a superior life does his music endow his characters, by the unaided power of sound and those sounds often, so simple and so few in number! With a single air, perhaps, or two at most: as when he crowned the brow of the Queen of the Night with immortal stars; or in the duet between Pamina and Papageno,—that tender, two-voiced litany, expressing, in a few measures, the complete idea or ideal of love. The alternating couplets of the dialogue, call to mind those of the "*Imitation*":

"Love guards the heart from all array—
O Love—thou art of life the flower!"

And so sings this music ; like love, it is light, and, like love, alluring and sweet.

“Don Juan,” too, is an idealistic masterpiece ; “Don Juan,” which never seems so beautiful as at a simple concert ; “Don Juan,” so charged with mind and spirit, that the stage representation never fails to spoil it. Listen to Elvira at her window : “Ah ! taci, ingiusto core ! Be silent my most unkind heart !” Or, as we read, in one of the French versions : “Nuit fraîche, nuit sereine.” But neither text is sufficient to the emotion. The sense of the music is so wide, it pulses with so vast and profound a melancholy, that all is comprised and enveloped in its waves of sound ; every heart-beat is sung and sighed out in the enchanting melody : the plaintive love of the woman’s heart, and the sympathising whispers of the night. And through the silence which follows, who is it, to whom Don Juan comes singing his serenade, beneath the balcony ? Perhaps he thinks to sing it only to the pretty “camarista” ; but since it is immortal, this serenade ; since “all which it declares is true,” as says the poet, who has best understood it, “that men deceive and yet love,”—weep as they smile, sin in innocence and are pure in the midst of guilt ; since this little song tells of all this,—it springs not only from the breast of him who sings, and

it rises higher and travels far beyond her who listens, and we know that in its measures breathes the note of the infinite, and that it speaks of the universal, and ideal love.

Even the very death of the Commandeur affirms the idealism of Mozart. Here the music is not careful to tell us, either what the living was, or the dead is ; with a few plaintive notes it follows, with sigh after sigh, the vanishing of life and the annihilation of being, along the purling tones of an oboe, as thin as a thread of ebbing blood, as feeble as an expiring breath. We stand before the ideal of death ; no beautiful death, despoiled of its horror, but a simple and abstract dissolution, reduced to all that is most general and only essential ;—death which depends on no accompanying circumstances, unqualified by the conditions of him whom it has struck.

Beethoven was a sublime idealist ; none of the great musicians were greater morally than he. His art was pure from the touch of all sensuality, free from all material taint or restraint ; in listening to him, we never taste even that caressing sweetness and physical pleasure which now and again insinuates itself into our hearts, through a cadence of Mozart. Even though it be “*Fidelio*,”—“To the loved-one far away,” all of Beethoven’s love-music is austere, and in its

sweetness, voluptuousness finds no part. Nor is this all ; for his idealism consists of more than the chaste simplicity of his genius,—no musical work of his is aught but the effect or the product,—the evolution or the illumination of that which, in music, is called an idea ; in no music does this idea move, struggle and triumph as in that of Beethoven. He is an idealist, and that signifies again, that the master of the nine symphonies, in music alone, with no recourse to words, knew how to speak,—not the sentiment nor the passion of this or that particular personage, but the universal sentiment and passion surging in his own and all human breasts,—the idea or the ideal of sovereign emotion. We find a grand example of this generalisation, in the Adagio of the “Fourth Symphony” (B-flat) ; the theme of the exquisite melody, is a love-song to the Countess Therese of Brunswick, the “Unsterbliche Geliebte.” Another proof of that immortal love has been found in three letters, written by the master to the Countess Therese, and in this double expression, by words and by sounds, of the one emotion, it is interesting to compare the prose of Beethoven with his music, and the love which speaks, with the love which sings. His words fall from his pen, agitated and incoherent; unequal in style and detached, broken with exclamations and

apostrophes, the letters betraying the condition of a disordered and delirious soul. Appeals and cries echo from every page,—every line : “ My angel ! My all. My Self ! . . . Be calm and love me. To-day, yesterday, how have I longed for thee ! Adieu ! Oh ! continue to love me, without forgetting the faithful heart of him, who loves thee.” And thus does Beethoven sign himself : “ Always thine, always mine, always one another’s.”

This is the man himself, but only the man. Would you seek something more than nature and life and reality,—after these human words, would you listen to a language divine ? Then turn to the Adagio of the “ B-flat Symphony ” and the word “ ideal ” will be light before your eyes. You will comprehend with Hegel that music “ should not reproduce the expression of sentiments, as though it were the natural eruption of the passions : it should carry a richer and more animated life into sounds, combined according to the relations of number and harmony ; thus will music idealise expression, giving it a superior form, created by art and by art alone ; the simple cry develops into a multitude of sounds ; for it has been taught a line of movement, the succession and the course of which are ruled by the laws of harmony and which unfold themselves in melody.”

"Be calm" Beethoven wrote to the young girl; and he himself was writing in a frenzy of love! But this calm, so wanting in his letters, takes complete possession of his music. Not that passion is alienated from this Adagio; the soul's affection dwells intense within it; but it is freed from haste, disquietude, fever and violence,—from all the lawless movements and from the passing, varying moods, which would diminish its purity and beauty. Passion has turned her eyes, as it were, towards the eternal, to a permanent order and harmony and peace; and yet this music appeals more directly to us,—the notes seem to us more transparent and at the same time more fitting signs than do words; and through them, as says Goethe, we read more deeply, into "the great, open secret."

I know of no more beautiful example in all Beethoven's music of the transfiguration of a sentiment or a passion, and its promotion from the realm of life and reality, to that of the ideal.

And finally the genius of Wagner, the great realist, was supremely idealistic; we have already seen, in "*Tannhäuser*," the opposition of these contrary forces, and his music,—as a whole the most nervous and the most enervating, the most sensual, and, in its way the most "physical" in the world, was, likewise, the most

immaterial, the most completely emptied of all but the spirit. No musician has created for himself, a truer ideal of music in general, than has Wagner; he conceived it with the eyes of a philosopher, or a metaphysician, as well as those of an artist; and, a disciple of Schopenhauer, he believed, with his master, that music expresses neither the visible form nor shadow of this world, but its metaphysical essence. "Whilst the other arts, all have direct relation with some one actual object, music addresses itself to us, directly, without representing to our eyes any particular thing. It touches us in the very depths of our being, without bringing into play our faculties of analysis and reasoning. If it is true, that all the arts have for their object, the revelation of the inner man, it is no less true, that "in all arts, with the exception of music, this revelation takes place only indirectly, and as by reflexion. When all other muses say: 'this signifies,' music alone may say: 'this is.' "¹

Idealism, that is, "the constant subordination of the fact to the idea, which gave it birth,"² is the essential and recognised character of the Wagnerian stage. It has been remarked, with much truth, that while in the drama of Wagner,

¹ "L'Esthétique de Richard Wagner," by J. G. Freson.

² H. S. Chamberlain.

as in those of Sophocles and Racine, “the legend presents to us singularly tragic events, it is not to these that the poet would draw the attention of the spectator. Quite the contrary, that which is of most interest, and that which the drama ever insists upon, is the conditions of soul by which the personages of the play are governed, whether they survive the tragedy, or become its victims.”¹ Wagner has fully explained himself, upon the question of the inward subjectivity of his musical drama, in his letter on music, published in the “*Quatre poèmes d’opéra*.” He feels that, in the “*Flying Dutchman*,” he has given for the first time a worthy part, to what he calls the internal motives of action. “You will find in ‘*Tannhäuser*,’” he adds, “already much more force, in the development of such motives; here, the final catastrophe is born, without the slightest effort, of a lyric and poetic struggle, in which no other power than that of the most secret moral forces, leads to the dénouement.”

So too, “the interest of ‘*Lohengrin*,’ rests entirely upon a revolution which takes place in the heart of Elsa, and which stirs the very mysteries of the soul”: While as for “*Tristan and Isolde*,” if great minds such as Liszt, have judged

¹ “Richard Wagner et le génie français,” by H. S. Chamberlain, (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, July 15th, 1896).

this Wagner's masterpiece, or, at least, the most representative of his works, it is, perhaps, because, the sensualism of the music rises to a very frenzy and fury, while, at the same time, the idealism of the poem is carried to the limit of abstraction and symbolism. "I confess," writes Wagner to Frederic Villot, "that I, too, felt constrained to ask myself these two questions: 'whence' and 'why?' Questions which, for long had despoiled my art of all its charm. But a time of penitence taught me to triumph over this impulse; and all my doubts were finally dissipated, when I began my work on 'Tristan.' I plunged with an entire confidence into the depths and mysteries of the soul, and from this secret, inner life of creation, I beheld the blossoming forth of its external form. . . . Life and death, the importance and the existence of the exterior world, depend, alike, upon the inner action of the soul. The act which is accomplished, depends upon one single cause, the soul which provoked it, and this act bears in the light of day, just the image which that soul, in its dreams, has formed."

But let us pause, or we shall find ourselves where the "pupil no longer understands his master, and where the master no longer understands himself." And yet how much might be said of the idealism of Wagner:—not of him as a philos-

opher or a poet, but as Wagner the musician, and as a musician alone! The “Leitmotiv,” is nothing if not idealistic, ending, when carried to its extreme limits, in a system of conventional signs, more intellectual than sensible,—consequently more ideal. And again this prodigiously augmented orchestra is an embodiment of the ideal,—and this deploying of all the sonorous forces, of all the “woods” and of all the “metals,” as though more and more of matter, and, if possible, all matter were at the disposition and in the service of the dominant and sovereign idea. Realistic as it may have seemed to us, the atmosphere, too, and the stage setting upon which Wagner insisted, for the representation of his works, has its ideal phases:—this darkened auditorium, whence every alien sensation but that of art is banished; where nothing, be it only a glance, a smile, or a woman’s face, may turn us from the gaze of that ideal, which seeks us, and shall take entire possession of us. And finally, how ideal is that melody, the timbre of that chord, which Wagner,—the Wagner of “Tannhäuser,” and “Lohengrin,” and “Parsifal”—has associated with all that is most chaste, most pure and most pious in love, be it Divine, or human!

From these different points of view,—after

finding the angel where we had found the brute, in a genius, which, doubtless, is the most striking example of such a contradiction, we cannot but consider the triumph of Wagner as a victory for idealism, recognising "that there is nothing less sensual than this conception of music, nothing less materialistic, than this conception of the art of the future."¹

VI.

Thus one after another, the great musicians have witnessed to the idealism of their art. But they have given, too, this other testimony:—that, in music, the ideal is not only not unreal, but that, on the contrary, born of our thought, or our sentiment, or our soul,—it is the most true, the most certain, the most real of all realities.

This is the turning point and the connecting link, as it were, of our subject; here the terms, realism and idealism, so opposed in their superficial, secondary acceptations are reconciled in their higher and profounder meaning. In truth, the establishment of the identity of these two terms, contradictory only in appearance, is at the bottom of every philosophical theory of idealism.

¹ "La Renaissance de l' idéalisme," M. Brunetière.

We have been very properly reminded, that, in philosophy,—from Parmenides to Hegel, or to M. Hartmann, if you will,—idealism consists in recognising as true and actually existing, only that which exists in a permanent and durable form.”¹

And again, with no less truth : “ That philosophy should receive the name of ‘ idealistic,’ ” which perceives, above and beyond the actual world, an entirely distinct universe, the product of our thoughts, whose theatre is an omnipresent spirit, perchance our own. But such a philosophy dares still more ; in place of a soul, charmed with all that which makes for good, and contenting itself with the inventing or embellishing of types, concerning the consistency of which, it allowed itself no illusion, we have now, a spirit, assuming confidence and faith in itself. Asserted realities become for it signs and symbols, and, henceforth, it considers only thoughts, with their inflexible laws and inexhaustible variety of forms and contours, as veritable existence.”²

And this transposition of the ideal and the real, is possible as well to the genius of music as to that of philosophy. Place “ sentiment ” in the stead of “ thought ” in the paragraph quoted

¹ M. Brunetière, *ibid.*

² “L’ Idéalisme en Angleterre au XVIII. Siecle,” by M. Georges Lyon ; quoted by M. Brunetière.

above, and it will define idealism in music, as clearly as in philosophy. "Asserted realities become signs and symbols," far more in music than in the other arts, and it is in sentiment alone that she finds "a veritable existence." It is only by the reality and the verity of sentiment, that the great idealists, great musicians too, may claim to be the great realists or rather, the great teachers of veracity. And none of them have fallen short of this ideal verity ; to be convinced of this we need only compare their masterpieces with our own passions, — and what we experience with what they express. Seated by the roadside of life, humanity ever demands of eternity : "is there any sorrow, joy, dream or soul even, like unto my soul, dream, joy and sorrow ?" Now and again there passes one who sings : but he is not great, and his name is soon forgotten, he is called neither Wagner, nor Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, nor Palestrina, if humanity cannot recognise herself in his songs.

In the songs which touch the heart of the universe, humanity will ever see herself, finding in them the very essence of her being ; that ideal which constitutes the most absolute reality of her life, all, in fine, which testifies that she is not matter, nor nature, but humanity. Such is the objective end of music ; her daily line of march,

and her constant progress consists, “in mounting, step by step, the summits of the inner life ; in returning, as the mystics so well said, from the without to the within, and from the within to the highest : ‘ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab interioribus ad superiora.’”¹

To define music clearly, in concluding, we need only cite, with but little change, Joubert’s celebrated words : “The more nearly a note, or chord, a melody, rhythm or sonority, touches a human sentiment or a soul, the more nearly is it ideal, the more nearly is it real, and the more nearly does it attain to the perfection of beauty.”

¹ Father Grétry.

BEETHOVEN,
AND HIS NINE SYMPHONIES.

TO SIR GEORGE GROVE, C. B.

BEETHOVEN, AND HIS NINE SYMPHONIES.

Beethoven and His Nine Symphonies by Sir George Grove, C. B.; London and New York; Trovello, Enie & Co., 1896.

THE pages of this unrivalled book exhaust a great subject,—the greatest, perhaps, which has ever offered itself to and defied the musical critic; for it is as a musician and a consummate artist that the English writer treats his subject. He studies the symphonies of Beethoven, and not symphonies in general; to no part of them is he a stranger, and nothing is indifferent to him, which touches upon them. Taking them up chronologically, he considers, in the first place, their organism and specific life: the theme, rhythm and timbre. He then proceeds to establish the relations existing between these first elements; and in what order, sense and towards what end, certain reactions and developments follow, and, finally, leaving the substance of the thing itself, he passes on to the accessories and surroundings. He seeks all antecedent in-

fluences, sometimes, too, the consequences ; and, no less curious about analogies than about origins, he is constantly bringing together and comparing the two. A commentator, he loves to make himself a historian, and the fortune, as well as the beauty of the various musical forms, interests him. He omits the examination of no rough draught, or copy, or even different reading, and, even from the corrections and retouches of trial efforts, does he spy out the oft-confounded secrets of genius and of labour. Dates of composition and of execution, questions of time and of place, modes and forms of publication, dedicatory notes and prices of sale ; risks and whims, errors and changes of opinion,—all are inventoried in this complete study ; no detail is lacking and the validity of every document is proved. In one word, Mr. Grove shows an erudition, ignorant of nothing which there is to be known upon the subject of Beethoven's symphonies.

But, again, we are conscious here of an artistic appreciation, which feels and communicates all that there is to feel in these great masterpieces.

- The author writes not only of what he knows but, of what he loves, and his work, not content with creating a practical manual and scrupulous inventory, results in a very profound and sympathetic study of art, and, following in a natural



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sequence, of the soul. Of a human soul, in the first place, and that one of the greatest which this earth has known ; after, of the soul of the symphony, in its complex, living existence ; and, finally, of the soul of music itself, that psychic value of sounds, so prodigiously augmented by the master of these nine symphonies. Thus this analysis goes deeper than its technicality, which is abundant and sure, and its specification, which is never dry nor obscure ; for, its research, psychological and moral, seeking something beyond forms and appearances, and behind means and signs, attains to the realities of thought and life. And Mr. Grove, not content with hearing these vital realities loves them, and hopes to make them beloved. "Let not our knowledge of God consist simply in the curiosity of our hearts ; let it establish within us a holy love of Him."¹ If it is thus that God should be known, may not the principle be applied as well to those masterpieces, which, beyond all others, are worthiest to be called Divine ?

Like the Muses, they number nine, like the Muses forming an immortal group, a sacred choir. They are not only the centre and summit of their special art, but one of the summits of the great human Art ; men speak of "The Nine

¹ Bossuet.

Symphonies" as they do of the Loggia of Raphael, of the Dramas of Shakespeare, or the Campaigns of Napoleon. They form an ensemble, an organic series of masterpieces, in which each touches and controls the other; in which each communicates with, but never commands the other. They describe a curve that has no parallel and a prodigious line of action: while some amongst them, seem to lose themselves in the heights of heaven, others, more humble, sink down and efface themselves before their more illustrious companions; like smiling valleys between sublime and thunder-riven peaks. Some gay, some inconsolably sorrowful, they not only exist, but live, and each its own, inspired life. More than one of them, in its untamed and virgin spirit, might say, with the "Vergine della Rocce" of the poet-romanticist of Italy: "I bear in my soul, the splendour of grand and sad destinies." All,—rich in their moral life, and heroic will, might adopt as their device, the noble motto of Da Vinci: "I can attain to no higher government, than that of myself."¹ In truth, we should celebrate as festivals, the anniversaries of those days, on which the nine symphonies, as one after another they were born into the world, were

¹"Non si può aver maggior signoria che quella di se medesimo."

played, for the first time ; for a brighter light and a deeper joy were brought to us, when life and the soul learned to speak through sound.

Assisted by our new interpreter, shall we enter once more the audience-room of these eternally eloquent sisters ? For however often we may listen, we never may hear all they say. To-day, we shall endeavour to follow, along the current, as it were, of the symphonies of Beethoven, first the symphony in itself, then the life and soul of the master, and, last, his music.

I

The symphony is the great masterpiece of music ; all musical elements, that of the human voice excepted, are to be found in it, and nothing enters into its composition which is not musical ; well-nigh all music speaks through the symphony, and nothing but music. Appealing to the intellect and to the senses, all the beauties of art are united in her ; she is the desire of the ear and the delight of the mind. Every genre, every type of music finds its outlet in the symphony, as surely as the river flows to the ocean ; of all, it is the consummation and the perfect

development. To the fugue it lends logic and reason, unbinding the fugal constraint, but never slackening its discipline; changing blind servitude into that enlightened and voluntary obedience to superior law, which constitutes true liberty. As purely musical in its elements, as the sonata or the quartette, it has the twofold advantage of a more varied timbre and vaster proportions. The sonata is solitary in its beauty, and, while the quartette, that choicest form of the profound, secret art of chamber-music, may be compared to the social group of the family, — the symphony is, even more largely representative: more fraternal than the Concerto, which is dominated by a single voice, and a principle of individuality and egotism, the symphony is a universal and unanimous concert. A concert in which things themselves seem to take part, as wood and metal burst into sound, that they may unite the music of nature, with the music of humanity.

And in this category of masterpieces, those of Beethoven reign supreme; through his genius have sounded forth the most beautiful among those tones, which have not and never may be sung by human lips, sound forth to-day still, sixty years after the master's death. For while the music of the stage has, once and again changed its form, that of the symphony has ever

remained fixed ; no other ideal has rivalled to its established perfection ; the greatest approach it, but the boldest do not flatter themselves, with the possibility of replacing it. What the symphony has lost since Beethoven, is easily seen, but I defy any man to show aught which it has gained : why then, need we wonder if the very word "Symphony," in connection with the great master, acquires a new sense, and rings with a new sound ?

This form of music, Beethoven renewed in every part ; there is not an element in it, which he did not augment, elevate to a more puissant position and promote to a higher life.

In the first place, he enlarged the orchestra : on writing his first symphony, he added a flute and two clarionets to the orchestration used by Mozart in his "Jupiter" Symphony ; and in Beethoven's symphony in C-minor, appear, for the first time, the trombones, the piccolo and the double bassoon. Having thus increased the number of the instruments, he proceeds to classify and distribute them : divides the orchestra into its separate parts, without weakening or dispersing them, and multiplies parts and players, with never a void in the completed whole. He establishes only the most simple, essential relations between the groups or families of sounds,

whether in assembling them or in setting them in opposition ; relations which are always the most logical and firmly founded upon the nature of timbre. The orchestra of Beethoven is full without being massive ; the abundance and variety of the details never obscuring the general plan and the grand intent of the whole. But at the very heart of this hierarchy and of this organism, the great master awakens, — often creates, new personalities : putting certain instruments to a use, of which they had always been considered incapable or unworthy. He lends to the horn, for instance an accent and colour, hitherto unknown. It is no longer the simple horn, whose note “ sounds sadly from the depths of the wood ” ; raised above the narrow sphere of hunting, and forest life, it acquires a voice of deeper meaning, appealing to one’s very heart ; and it is no hunter’s chorus which rings through the grave Trio of the symphony in “ A.” A mystery, touching the very soul, lies in the notes of the horn, which wander through sixteen dream-like measures of the Adagio of the “ Ninth symphony ; ” and it is the horn which leads the Trio of the “ Eroica ” ; here, especially, the instrument breathing a human note, the voice of flesh and blood. The last measures are filled with a strange poetry ; — nothing, indeed, in

Beethoven is more serious and more profound than that weird something of infinity and of eternity which he has instilled in this music of the horn.

But Beethoven lent expression, even eloquence, to still more rudimentary instruments,—to the very kettle-drums themselves. In the Andante of his first symphony, he makes them accord, as never before ; he dignifies their solemn vibrating notes ; he predestines them to the future worth of their position and, in his fourth symphony, (in B-flat), displays all their sombre magnificence. In the repeat of the first part, the marvellous re-entry of the principal theme, is suggested, developed and consummated by a grand roll of the kettle-drums ; but it is in the Adagio, that the exceeding beauty of a possible design or “figure” for these instruments is brought out. Here there is even no roll of the drums, but a simple accent, a regular beat of the dominant resting upon the tonic ; an accent which assumes an unequalled tone of gravity. Here and there the drums beat an undertone to the stately melody which we cannot but hear as a canticle of love ; the rhythm of their powerful pulsations seems to mark the course of a happy life and serene thought ; they, most of all seem to lead to the very mystery of dream-life, to the inmost recesses

of that master's soul, than which no other we may almost dare to say, ever breathed to its fellows ideas so profound.

But Beethoven was as great a creator of harmonies as of sonorous sounds ; every symphonic element grew beneath his touch, and by him relations multiplied not only between instruments, but between the very notes themselves. And thus, from a twofold point of view, is his symphony more widely and deeply social than that of Haydn, or even of Mozart. His association of sound, his accord of tonalities is one markedly complex, and far in advance of his contemporaries,—one in which relations, many in number, and often of extreme delicacy, are regulated by laws, liberal yet inflexible. With the notes of some symphony of Haydn or of Mozart in our minds, how brilliantly and how strikingly does the music of Beethoven bear witness, not only to an orchestration, but to a harmony enriched and revivified? What chords ever resounded in such plentitude of sonorousness, or were rounded out in so complete a harmony? Listen, for example, to the first two chords of the “Eroica,”—to the chords of the symphony in “C-minor” and that in “A,” chopped off as they are, or slashed, rather, with great strokes of the violin-bow ; or to the full orchestral chords of the “C-minor” finale.

Even the first notes of his first symphony inspired in its earliest presentation a sensation, which was near being a scandal. Were his critics to concede without due consideration, that a symphony in "C-minor," so-called, should dare to announce itself in a dissonant chord of "F"? Many like "faults," and always of harmony, were not only blamed,—they were corrected. Mr. Grove reminds us of how Fétis modified a harmony of Beethoven. In the Andante of the symphony in "C-minor," during the variation of the altos and cellos, it befalls that, against the chord of the sixth,—"F-B flat-D flat," the wind-instruments sustain an "E flat" with a most original and exquisite effect. But Fétis, refusing to believe Beethoven capable of so gross an error, replaced the offending "E flat" by an "A." Another "error," and of equal "grossness," is to be found in the celebrated passage of the first movement of the "Eroica," in which the French horn introduces the first four notes of the original theme,—the chord of "E flat," beneath two notes in the chord of the dominant, on the violins. At the first rendering, it is said, that Ries, seated at the side of his master, could not avoid noticing the unexpected dissonance with an unfortunate movement of astonishment, and that Beethoven responded to the instinctive criticism, with an

emphasising sweep of his baton upon the offending note.

This harmony was contrary to all the rules of the time ; absolutely faulty, — but how beautiful ! How perfectly placed, and how profoundly poetical. “The heroic movement of the basses has left us in regions strange and far away ; the tumult of the day quiets, and, little by little is stilled as the horns and all wind-instruments complete the enchantment. A magic twilight steals over all, while the instruments suspend their mysterious rustling ; none but the violins, with ineffable sweetness, tremble dreamily through the air, as, far below, like the remembrance of some half-forgotten dream, the notes of the horn rise and float over the harmonies. We are charmed with one of those strange impossibilities, which never startle our propriety in dreams. But of a sudden the spell is broken ; some miracle transforms all and, behold, in the full light of day, our faculties alert, we find ourselves once more at home, in the subject and the tonalities of the beginning.”

No arbitrary interpretation, but one which is most intelligent, and which, without altering or restraining a note of the musical text, makes salient every detail, every harmonic fault, if you will, of those tones which vibrate with the prophecy

of the new and the beautiful through every symphony of Beethoven.

Let us go a step farther ; seeking, beneath the instrumentation and the harmony, the very centre, the soul of the symphony. And even that soul, which is the idea, or the melody we find reanimated ; there is no shorter path to travel, between the melody of Haydn and that of Beethoven, than between the orchestra of the one and the other. It is because Beethoven has formed the most beautiful combinations, with elements in themselves the most beautiful, that we account him grandest of musicians ; because in his symphonies, the individual beauty of each melodious detail is equal to the complete beauty, born of the associated whole.

The melody of Beethoven is superior even to that of Bach not so much perhaps in its richness, as in a certain pure liberty, and a character, which is constantly human and alive. The sublime old "Cantor," knew well how to be both human and alive, and yet how often he seems to draw away from both humanity and life ; while his melody renounces its individuality in an idealisation, which becomes no more than a graphic figure of its former self, as the unvarying rhythms unfold themselves in an infinite time and space. His is a mechanism, logical above all else, and a creation which is en-

tirely spiritual ; a masterwork, but of pure reason. Its melody appeals to the mind, but that of Beethoven seizes overwhelmingly upon the soul, filling it with gladness or with mourning, but never failing to set it throbbing with its beauty, not rational but passionate. Of music, Bach was not only the "Dominus," but the "Magister"; the prodigious instructor of genius; and thus it may be that his melody stiffens with a dryness over-classical, which brings with it now and again, a whiff of the schoolroom. Beethoven's melody, on the contrary, whispers never of anything but truth, in action and life.

Sweet melody had lived indeed, before his day and a light, gay life, in innumerable symphonies of Haydn, or in the "G-minor" of Mozart, which begins with such a melancholy smile. But with the opening theme of this last work, unequalled perhaps, before Beethoven, compare that of the later master's symphony in "C-minor." "It is destiny," said Beethoven, "knocking at the door," and verily it was more than his own destiny, it was the destiny of his beloved art; melody was immeasurably sweetened and strengthened, as beneath the shock of those four tremendous notes, the portals of the future fell open.

It often happens that Beethoven appropriates

the melodic idea of another, but only to return it, increased a hundredfold. He borrows from Mozart the motive from the overture of a little operetta, "Bastien et Bastienne" to weave it into the first movement of the "Eroica," and in a certain collection of Croatian songs, may be found themes, almost identical with those of the opening and close of the "Pastoral." Whether indeed the original melodies of many of his symphonies were those of Beethoven or of some one else, no man knows.¹ The motive of the trio of the symphony in "A" has been recognised by Abbé Stadtler, in a pilgrim hymn, much sung in lower Austria, and the Finale of the "Eighth Symphony," can scarcely claim to be other than the development, the splendid expansion of the Finale of a certain symphony of Haydn's in "G-major." This latter was so familiar to Beethoven, that the theme of the Largo may be found as many as five times in his works.

But, whether appropriated or created, we may rest assured that the melodies of Beethoven, never sprang spontaneously into being; the sketch-books of the master witness, with an

¹ Professor Kuhac and Dr. Heinrich Reimann in the "Allgemeine Muzikzeitung" of the 6th, 13th and 20th of October, 1893, and the 20th of July, 3d and 17th of August, 1894. (Quoted by Mr. Grove.)

eloquence unexpected and often very sad, to the persevering obstinacy and agony, even, of his researches and efforts. In miserable old copy-books, badly sewed together, on the leaves of a paper grey and coarse as butchers' paper, the lonely, stern man wrote as he walked to and fro, inscribing his thoughts hastily, at random, and as though by sudden lightning-flashes. He wrote, effaced, rewrote and effaced once more, having always the rough draught of several works in his books, at the same time. Thus it chances that, in one of the most important sketch-books, we find outlines of the "Second Symphony," written in confusedly with those of three sonatas for piano and violin and of three sonatas for piano alone. Many are the sketches of the opening and Finale of the "Eighth Symphony," while the master evidently long sought in vain the opening of the symphony in "C-minor." That theme, "the most famous in the world," that sudden burst, which seems the involuntary, breaking forth of a cry, was never transfixed by Beethoven, with a single stroke of his rude thunder.

We find in none of the preparatory versions, the pedal-points of the second and fourth measure, the sudden pause after the spring; the effect, at once so powerful and so novel, of the explosion,—then the silence.

But those motives which Beethoven elaborated most fully, are to be found in his "Choral Symphony;" they point out the far away goal of his path, or rather the summit, which eternally contemplated, dominated his horizon. In a sketch-book of 1815, appears the theme of the Scherzo, and about 1818 that of the Trio, which a Trio of the "Second Symphony," written about 1802, seems to contain in germ: while the theme of the Finale, in especial, is frequently announced. It seemed to be always floating about Beethoven, disquieting his peace, possessing his thoughts. Schiller's "Ode to Joy" had ever been a favourite of the master; in 1798, between a sketch of a Rondo and that of a Sonata, we find, for the first time, the "sacred words." In 1811, he makes a note of them, at two different times; later he returns to the theme again, and thus, little by little, there was formed and crystallised in his mind, that grandest of all his melodies; from which issued an entire Finale,—and what a Finale! Contained, supported and developed in a melodic identity, victoriously persistent, through all the instrumental and vocal variations of an immense polyphony. Well might Wagner say: "Beethoven freed his melody from the shackles of fashion, caprice and taste; he willed that it should represent the type of pure, eternal hu-

manity." If Beethoven drew from this melody an entire Finale, Wagner himself, deduced from it a complete system of dramatic music. The "Leitmotiv" of the "Ode to Joy" is always turned to, as the corner stone of the Wagnerian edifice. And what other melody had ever such a story? The history of many a musical idea has been famed; as, for instance, the opening theme of the "Eroica," borrowed by Beethoven from Mozart, and imitated by Schubert and Brahms. But it was to a new order that the closing melody of the "Ninth Symphony" gave birth; it was Goethe who classed it among the "mothers," and Wagner might fitly have christened it "Ur-melodie,"—the primordial melody, for it seems verily to breathe in our ears a song of the morning of the world.

Under the influence of and growing to the measure of Beethoven's tremendous genius, the art-form called a symphony was developed as a complete musical composition; everything was an accessory, nothing was in dissent with the beautiful and supple organism. And of the four parts which composed it, the most insignificant was not the one least transformed. The Scherzo of Beethoven grew out of the Minuet of Haydn and of Mozart; we feel the same rhythm, we see the same division into parts, but the letter

alone remains, the spirit is born again. A dainty dance is changed into a poem, and something kindly and gay, into something profound and, at times, sublime. The Scherzo, in the true acceptation of the term, did not exist before Beethoven, and his third Symphony,—the “Eroica”: its Scherzo is the first of “those great movements” created by Beethoven, and essentially his; in which there mingle, with a power till then unfelt, the tragedy and the comedy of life. One, indeed, of the number is a dance,—that of the “Pastoral,”—but listen to the rhythm, which the feet of the dancers follow; hear the dying away of the oboe, the grotesque bassoon, and the Trio scraped along the strings, in a sort of fury! Where are the Minuets of other days,—the graceful bows and stately steps along the polished floors? “Nunc pede libero pulsanda tellus.” To the rude Flemish nature, which was Beethoven’s by blood if not by birth; to the compatriot of Rubens and Teniers, the dance was something else than a pleasure, a mere worldly ceremonial; it was a movement instinctive and joyous, the natural play of the human animal revelling in his strength and in his liberty.

The Scherzo of the “Ninth Symphony” is the master’s greatest, that one which has been defined, and justly, as “a miracle of repetition,

without monotony," that one of which Rossini said, with a smile, as he turned away from the first performance of the Symphony, in the Paris conservatory : " I have never known anything so beautiful. I doubt whether I could have done as well myself." But his most extraordinary Scherzo is that of the Symphony in " C-minor." An external peculiarity is, that it is written so as to form one with the opening pages of the Finale and that, in the midst of this latter movement, it reappears in its individual tempo and form ; but for its greatest novelty, we must pass on into the sentiment, the real soul of the prodigious work. A Scherzo, as indeed the name suggests, speaks in general, something animated and gay, but here the atmosphere is sombre ; first a call, the mysterious notes tied by the heavy bows, then the reply, and the harsh baying of the horns. For a moment the Trio responds to these presentiments and menaces, by an access of terrible gaiety, a gigantic burst of laughter, till, against the colossal irony, comes creeping up once more the irresistible sadness. But with a change of accent : to legato, succeeds staccato, pizzicato — all the lighter accentuations ; the horns give way to clarionets, oboes and the agile violins ; the detached notes seem to crisp and shrivel, till there is nothing sustained, scarce anything sonorous. Every-

thing grows less and less, thinning to the merest breath, but a breath of fear: never did so small a sound cause so great consternation! Suddenly, after seventy bars, in the key of "C-minor," the basses give an "A-flat," the kettle-drums begin a pedal point on "C" in irregular rhythm, and, "by this sudden change, as grand as the introduction to the storm in the "Pastoral Symphony," begins the miraculous transition of the Scherzo into the Finale." Little by little the disintegrated elements, seek one another in reunion,—and force and life recover strength. Not in all nature, not in wild and winding mountain trails is there a defile comparable to this; never was there so radiant a passage from the shadow to the light. Nor, indeed, in the realm of mind and soul, for it is an unequalled symbol of rise and resurrection,—this Scherzo, fading, and broken, which animated with a new life, springs up and rushes to lose itself in the enchanting Finale.

We cannot dwell too much upon the fact that Beethoven developed every element and all strength in each movement of the Symphony; through him, introduction, repetition, and Coda, took to themselves hitherto unknown proportions. There are indeed among his Symphonies, those into which he does not trouble to even introduce

us ; he throws us brusquely into the "C-minor," and the "Eighth Symphony"; but, when he chooses to prepare us, what a preparation it is indeed ! Now,—as in the "Eroica," for instance, two chords suffice, and, again, in the "Pastoral," the theme gently insinuates itself. The opening of the "First Symphony" is of little moment ; and that of the "Choral Symphony" is not properly speaking an introduction, but rather a period of presentiment, trouble and disquietude, out of which there springs in a terrible unison, the formulated theme. Only to the "Second" and "Fourth," and above all to the "Symphony in A," the most grandly announced of all, has Beethoven given any veritable introduction ; at the threshold of this latter he bids us draw back, within a mysterious retreat, as though the hour of never such a sacred confidence had arrived,—a whisper of new and holy words. "This begins with a brief chord in "A," of the whole orchestra, which distills a melodious phrase on the oboes, taken up in turn, by clarionet, horn and bassoon." Yes, verily, this phrase drops like pearls ; and the metaphor of the English critic applies to the whole introduction. Few or many, precipitate or slow, in heavy shower or light, the notes fall drop by drop, not equal only but transparent. How pure

is that “E,” repeated as many as sixty-three times, unvarying and solitary! For a time we ask whether the chord of the tonic or of the dominant will reflect the crystal tone, till the latter, gently and with exquisite indolence, determines the tonality of that one of his Symphonies, which Beethoven willed that we should hear the oftenest and love the best.

And after such a launching forth, into what seas does the master bear us! No other beginning could have prepared us for such developments. It is an important law of music, that a theme,—a melody, receives life, only that it may transmit and distribute it; but just created, it must give birth to and multiply forms, not identical with itself but similar, and which participate in and proceed from its own being: this generating power is the essence not only of the Symphony, but of all pure music. In that Schumann and Schubert possessed this power but incompletely, they were inferior to Beethoven; in that the latter possessed it in the fullness of its possibility, he was the superior of all,—superior, even to Bach, himself, in whom the evolution of thought, colossal though it was, was stiffened, always, by lines a little too rigorous and mechanical. Evolution seems a part of the very organism of Beethoven’s work, expressed

in the “working out” of his themes. It is the principle of the Fugue still acting, but with the hidden movement that the blood follows beneath the skin : here the elaboration is more than intellectual, it is moral, for while an idea is developed, a will asserts itself, resists and combats. This “working out” of Beethoven rings with a conflict, sometimes terrible, always sad. Well has Mr. Grove described that of the opening of the “*Eroica*”: “After just a suggestion of the Fugue, to show us, at it were, of what he might be capable, in that direction, Beethoven tells us that he is in no humour for such play, at present. Elsewhere he may have leisure to amuse himself with counterpoint,—here his passion is too strong : thought is all in all to him, methods of expression, nothing. This short promise of counterpoint, is brusquely carried off in an explosion of rage, which forms the central idea of the entire movement, and in which the most irreconcilable dissonances, and the most obstinate dislocations of rhythm, form together a scene of stubborn fury. These are passions which would break the heart of any but the gigantic hero whom Beethoven was portraying ; and, in truth, this hero was much less a Bonaparte, than the great genius, himself. Such a passage, thirty-two bars long, was essentially and solely of Beethoven ;

nothing of the like was to be found in the older masters, and the critics of his day, fell far short of understanding him ; they who looked at the notes alone, and who judged according to the rules of sound, with never a thought to what those sounds might signify."

This scheme of evolution is perfected to the point of obstinacy in the " Eighth Symphony," which culminates in a fury, almost intolerable in its repetitions and reduplications. But nothing equals the working out of the first movement of the " Third Symphony" in which Beethoven breaks the fundamental theme in two only to create from the sundered parts, an order, which is a veritable new world. From a simple figure of four semi-quavers he forms a melody, which is regular, and for a time, automatic : while as for the stern, descending arpeggio — that tumbling fall of note on note which is the real announcement of the melody, here it is that we must look to find " that depth of knowledge with which the great musician-poet knows to treat a theme which springs from his heart. Assuredly in all music there is nothing nobler than this grand theme, which lets itself fall by simple intervals from the top of the chord to the bottom, accompanied only by the pizzicato of the basses. . . . The ' A-flat ' which Beethoven in-

troduces here, lends a touch of extraordinary pathos. One may say of it without exaggeration, as of a certain half-tone in one of Handel's overtures, that this 'A-flat' 'is worth the world.' " The text of Mr. Grove, illuminated with many illustrations, should be followed in its development of this motive of four semi-quavers one by one, in fugue and counterpoint, as the various instruments take possession of it, abandon, and lay hold of it again. Now Beethoven treats it as a purely logical element, and again, communicates to it a moral life and vital sweetness. Never did insatiable genius, demand and obtain so much, from so few notes, pursued for long, and loved so ardently : and the English critic with a fine delicacy has seized upon the peculiar character of this incomparable development. He points us to the respites and remissions which, in the midst of all the energy and passion surprise and thrill our heart strings : one of the most touching of which is the "A-flat" of which we were just speaking, as it swerves the superb theme aside, into a by-path of melancholy tenderness. " In the course of the evolution of this first theme, every sincere listener will recognise an inexpressible, troubled hesitation, unfelt elsewhere ; certain notes of the flute or oboe, are trembling as sighs rising from an oppressed heart to human

lips. There is no need of specifying such passages ; they strike every sympathetic listener ; they testify, and let us say it with all reverence, that the great Beethoven, with all his genius, lived through moments which were dominated by thoughts for which he could find no adequate mode of expression. These traits of human weakness are not among the least precious to the loving sympathy of the friends and admirers of the great master."

In the first movement of the "Ninth Symphony," Beethoven has described the entire orbit of his sonorous thought ; in its Coda, the transformed latter portion, no less than in the introduction and the development. The primal theme reappears, indeed, in the Coda, but no longer as it was first presented to us ; once vague and mysterious, from unison and the minor, it breaks forth now into a rich harmony, with full orchestra, and concludes in the major ; the melody has completed its design, achieved its mission, assured its own triumph. A truce to uncertainty and anguish : it rushes on now to its glorious unfolding,—and yet, in the full course of this eloquence, Beethoven finds the way to tell us that, whereof he has not spoken before, and whispers in our ears, secrets no longer of impatience and anger but of bitterness, and of grief, which is

tender,—almost feminine. Before laying hold once more upon his natural, strong self, before concluding with his ordinary nobility and power, he bends under the load, if only for an instant; but just the passing faltering of distress veils this first movement of Beethoven's last Symphony, with a shadow, unequalled in its plaintive and touching sadness.

Careful and serious should be the study of the Coda of the first Allegro of the “Eroica.” “Forty bars long, beautiful with freshness and originality, it throws into the shadow all which has gone before; will ever remain, indeed, one of the miracles of music. What must have been the effect of pages such as these at their conception, in 1805, if to-day, known by heart to every lover of music, after all that Beethoven himself has since written, after Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Wagner, Brahms, they still stand peerless at the summit of nobility and poetry! Such a Coda is something other than the indifferent peroration of a thought which might have equally well completed itself, in any other way: it is an essential part of the musical poem, and as such must we listen to it.”

But the most beautiful of all the Codas, the most significant and symbolic, is that of the last movement of the “Eroica,” not in its final

Presto measures, but in the Poco Andante which precedes them. In all of Beethoven's Symphonies, I know of no other example of a slow Coda. The retard only serves to redouble the impression of grandeur and force which grows towards the end of the symphony: the relation of this Finale to the rest of the work, to the first part and the funeral march, has not always been worthily recognised; nor has it been fully understood, that the symphony finds here its necessary coronation,—the idea, its consummation, the hero, his apotheosis. After the Allegro of the Finale, with its rather dry, nervous style, how beautiful is this free, broad Andante. "How it lifts ever higher, on swelling surges of triplets and syncopations, the theme which mounts triumphant! That theme which rises slowly, freed not only from fever and from trouble, but from the very haste of living, and exists now in the higher life, the grand sum total of life; patient, because it is eternal. All is forgotten, has disappeared; the struggles and combats of the first movement, the mourning, the regrets, and the tears of the Funeral March; death itself is vanquished, and the theme enters into the eternal rest and immutability of its being. This it is that makes this slow Coda so beautiful, uniquely beautiful; and this is the most fitting end,—

the latter end, as the theologians say, of that beautiful sound-creature, the Symphony, which Beethoven has made the sister of such creatures as we ourselves are; reaching as do we, by an ephemeral and changing life, that existence which changes not and passes not.

II.

Such, through Beethoven did the symphony become. Let us now look at the man himself, as he appears in his Nine Symphonies. These all bear witness to his soul, but not all of them tell the story of his life; the spirit of one of them at least, is alien, contrary even, to the circumstances under which it was composed, and Beethoven, grand elsewhere in the telling of his pain, is grand here in its hiding. The second symphony—in “D,”—is nothing but an heroic falsehood; a gay lie,—a work of joy, conceived during hours of suffering. It was written towards the end of 1802: the summer and autumn of which year the master had spent near Vienna, in his well-loved valley of Heiligenstadt. From there, in a panic of despair, he wrote to his brothers the “Will of Heiligenstadt,” that most sad and touching of all avowals, appeals and adieux.—

The avowal of physical misery and infirmity, and of deafness, the maddening, almost humiliating irony of which, he had already endured for six years, though as yet, only thirty-two years of age.—The appeal of a soul, misunderstood by men, known alone to God ; of a soul naturally inclined to gentleness, and hungry for love, but shut up forever, by the shadow of a concealed malady, in a shamefaced solitude and bashfulness which was actually savage in its intensity.—The adieu to all the illusions and the dreams, to all the sweet commerce of fraternal and, indeed, of human life. “As the leaves of autumn fall and fade, so fade my hopes. As I came, I leave, and the sublime courage, which often inspired me during the summer, has vanished. . . . O Providence! Canst Thou not give me at least one day of joy, since for so long a time, the sound of true *joy* has been a stranger to my ears!” It is Beethoven himself, who underlines the “*joy*.” That *joy*, which as he wrote the second symphony, he called and still hoped for ; that longing for happiness which dies so slow a death in the hearts of us all. Twenty years later, he has renounced all thought of it for himself, and, in the Finale of the “Ninth Symphony,” prays for it only in the name of Humanity.

That *joy* which should live no longer in the

youthful but darkened heart sings all along the "Symphony in D"; the smiling song of a sorrow-stricken soul. This work contains not one measure of despair,—breathes indeed only confidence and hope. Bright light illuminates its pages from the beginning; in the brilliant trills of introduction, the theme of the first part, and its facile developments without contradiction, or strife. The Larghetto possesses an inexpressibly lovely air of nonchalance,—it is a dialogue of calm voices, exchanging calm words; not one of its questions is troubled, not one of the responses despairing. In none of Beethoven's Andantes do more supple forms fall in more gentle whispers; in no other does day following day, break upon so serene an horizon: whilst the Finale throws out the contrast between the work as a whole and what Taine calls "the moment." However unhappy was this period of Beethoven's life, his music bears no trace of his trouble, and for the time, at least, the genius of the master refused to serve his despair.

The most salient trait of Beethoven's character, and the depth and essence of his moral nature revealed itself two years later, in his third symphony, the "Eroica"; the second of his works to which he himself gave a title; the first being the sonata, called by him "The Pathetic."

We know by what hero the great genius of Beethoven was inspired, and we know, too, how, after consecrating his work to the First Consul, the angry master seized it again from the Emperor. But, indeed, it could never be the property of one alone, however great he might be; the "Eroica" speaks to humanity. Representative of all heroes, it is preëminently the story of the great hero Beethoven. "The hero," said Carlyle with profound meaning, "can be poet, prophet, king, priest or what you will according to the kind of world he finds himself born into. I confess I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be all sorts of men. The poet who could merely sit on a chair and compose stanzas, would never make a stanza worth much. He could not sing the Heroic Warrior unless he himself were at least a Heroic Warrior too."

And Beethoven more than any of the great musicians, was a heroic warrior. Every day of his life was the day's march of a hero, every hour of the life disputed step by step at the hands of sadness and despair. He possessed "The great heart, the clear eye which sees profoundly;" and he had too the grand soul, which wills invincibly. If Carlyle has not named Beethoven in his fine picture of the hero-poet, it must have been Beethoven of whom he thought;

it would seem that it must be Beethoven of whom he speaks, and that it is to Beethoven, and him alone, that he applies this beautiful definition : "the soul of a hero, incarnated as a musician."

But even though the psychologic and moral sense of the "Third Symphony" appeals deeply to every form of heroism, we must not look upon it as the only heroic, or even as the most heroic of Beethoven's works. Sonatas, quartettes, symphonies, concertos, every creature of the master's, vibrates with a song of victory like the slapping of battle flags in the wind, but this "Eroica" celebrates his first victory : others, more tragic and more cruel, cost more tears and blood,—have lost the alacrity and grace and brilliance of the flower of youth. The triumph of the "C-minor" symphony is supreme and terrible, a picture of the lowering sky and blood-stained snow of Eylau ;— the "Eroica" breathes the warm sun and gentle slopes of the Italian campagna, the spring sunshine and the first smile of glory.

Compare the entering chords of the "Eroica" with those of the symphony in "C-minor." If only in the difference of the two attacks, we feel that the stories to be told us are unequal in their fury and death. The début of the "Eroica" is an exposition, — that of the "C-minor" an explo-

sion : in one force announces and defines itself, without excitement ; the other trembles with the brutality of the first shock. The theme of the "Eroica," is in calm rhythm, and founded upon the perfect chord, but the harsh beauty of the opening of the "C-minor" is that of dissonant chords and a choppy rhythm. In his "working-out" of the "Eroica" Beethoven has avoided all rough struggle, but he never conceived of more furious attacks than in that of the "C-minor"; it is there that he suffers without mercy, and struggles without truce, — without even one of those breathing-spots of amnesty, which in the "Eroica," are vouchsafed him by a less implacable fate. We need but to remind ourselves of the Coda in the first Allegro of the latter Symphony, and the enchanting opening, with its winged arrows, preceding and escorting, in their flight, the return of the victorious theme and the Finale, to its last supreme apotheosis, ringing with the same character and the same youth.

Here, more than anywhere else in the works of Beethoven, the themes of triumph are free and youthful; it is the first victory of an adolescent hero. Yet already the workmanship is perfect; the creator of the "Third Symphony" is in full possession of his art and of his genius; a master-

piece of beauty and morality, a threefold representation of a sublime intelligence, sensibility and will, the “*Eroica*” is less grand than the “C-minor,” but it is no less beautiful, and represents the genius of Beethoven in its entirety, if not in its supreme strength.

Slipping between these two great works, of which we have been speaking, “the Fourth Symphony,”—that in “B-flat”—too often passes without notice; but Mr. Grove has invoked for it our admiration and our sympathy. Men have claimed that the genius of Beethoven had no other subject and no other aliment than that of suffering, but such an assertion is no more true of him, than of Shakespeare. Both of these great souls have responded as well to joy as to sorrow; and the “Fourth Symphony,” like the “Second” is a symphony of gladness, but its story is deeper and still more enchanting,—it is the Symphony of Love.

In its inception, the C-minor was to immediately succeed to the “*Eroica*. ” It was in 1805 that Beethoven wrote its first two parts, pages of stormy, tormented love; but, in 1806, the happiness of this love seemed about to be forever assured and Beethoven abandoned altogether the work under his hands; while, out of that great, rejoicing heart, burst forth the brilliant symphony

in "B-flat," whose heavenly Adagio is the canticle of happy love.

Happy love of only too brief a bloom ; a love, glistening in its purity among the loves of a pure man, it was, during four years, the source of his genius and the consolation of his suffering. Would that it might have been his lifelong refuge and salvation ! Its very noble, very proud young heroine was the Countess Therese of Brunswick, she whom Beethoven named, and whom posterity will know forever, as his "*Unsterbliche Geliebte.*" After his death, three letters were found among his papers, bearing that superscription, but no other indication of time or place than the dates, July 6th and 7th. The portrait of a woman lay with them, these words written upon it : "To a rare genius,—to a great artist,—to a good man," and the signature : T. B. The portrait is that of the Countess Therese, and it was to her that the three letters were addressed, Beethoven having written them from Fured, a little watering place of Hungary. He had gone there on leaving Martonvasar, the hereditary domain of his friends of Brunswick, where, according to his habit, he had been passing some time, and where he had secretly engaged himself to the young Countess. This was in 1806, the year in which he composed the "*Symphony in B-flat.*"

A friend, so near the Countess Therese as to occupy almost the place of an adopted daughter, has retraced, by the light of her own memory, the exquisite figure of the woman, who is inseparable from certain of Beethoven's masterpieces, amongst others that "Fourth Symphony," which is now occupying us.¹ The author of these precious pages was but a little girl, when she first saw the Countess Therese, withdrawn then from the world, and living only for the good which she might do. To the child who passed charmed hours, seated on a stool at her feet, the older woman's deep eyes and grave, sweet voice were instinct with the tenderness of a mother and the grace of a fairy. Once the stool pressed too close, and the dress of the Countess was caught and torn. The little girl began to weep, but her friend bent over, with kind arms about her, and said: "Dear, the slight rent of a dress is not worth such distress. Keep thy tears for the rending asunder of thy life, for, mayhap, even that will come to thee." Of her own heartbreaks, she told something, in later years to the girl. Once she charged her young confidante to go,

¹ Beethoven's *Unsterbliche Geliebte*, by Mariam Tenger; Bonn, 1890, second edition. Many of the above details concerning Beethoven and Therese of Brunswick are borrowed — often literally — from this interesting sketch.

on the 27th of every March, to the cemetery of Waehring, and place a cluster of immortelles, on the most illustrious of its tombs. The first time that the child went thither, a friend of Beethoven's saw the little messenger and asked who had sent her. "I should have known without asking," he murmured, on the child's response; "immortelles could come from none but she!" On another day the Countess opened a casket before her little friend, saying: "I will show thee the treasures of her who was once that great lady, Therese of Brunswick." Within the box, were some withered immortelles, and a discoloured paper, bearing the words: "The immortal lover to his immortal loved one—Ludwig." And, at last, in 1861, it was upon these sorry, faded flowers, wrapped in their covering of white silk, that the "*Unsterbliche Geliebte*" lay down her head forever.

A youthful adventure was the prologue to this sad love story. In 1794, when the Countess Therese was but sixteen years of age, she took piano-forte lessons from Beethoven, who was the friend and protégé of her oldest brother, Count Franz. One day—a winter's day, icy and white with snow,—the master arrived, more savage even than usual, with stern eyes and angry mouth. "Have you worked on your sonata?" "Yes,"

stammered the child, already completely confused. "Humph, we shall see!" Under the eyes, severer every moment, her fingers stumbled more and more. "In time, in time!" shrieked Beethoven, and suddenly bringing his fist down angrily, not only on the keyboard, but on the trembling little fingers, he sprang up through the door and out into the street. "Mein Gott! Mein Gott!" cried the girl. "Without hat or coat!" And catching up both, she rushed out of doors after him. The commotion of this stormy lesson aroused the mother, and what was the dismay of the noble dame, upon seeing her daughter, a Countess of Brunswick, running down the street after a music teacher. Therese did not run far; sent after in all haste, she was brought home, and Beethoven, who, by this, had turned back, received his hat and his coat from the hands of a domestic. Therese, furthermore, was sent to her room to reflect, for the rest of the day, upon the naughtiness of her behaviour; but the only fruit of her meditation seems to have been these few words which we find, written in French, on every page of her journal of those days: "Mon maître! Mon maître chéri!"

Some ten years later, under the trees of Martonvasar, Count Franz told Beethoven this story. Long and enthusiastically he spoke of the sister

whom he adored ; of his “ little Resi,”—of her brave loyalty, her goodness, devotion and love, till, at length, the eyes of the master were opened, and he saw fully all that, till then, he had scarcely looked at. Recognising in her, the predestined companion of his solitude, the angel of peace and consolation, it was thus that Beethoven came to love the young girl, something as another dark hero, loved the gentle Venetian, for the pity which she had borne for him and would feign bear, to all eternity. “One evening,” so the lady tells, “ we were seated in the salon, Beethoven at the piano, and no stranger in the room, but the curé, who was in the habit of dining with us every Sunday evening. Suddenly the moonlight came creeping into the room,—it was all that he needed ; and Franz, who was seated beside me, said softly, ‘ Listen now, he will improvise.’ Ah was I not listening ! . . . He was drawing his hand slowly all along the key-board, and we knew the sign, for it was thus that he always preluded his sublime harmonies. Then he struck some chords in the bass clef, and slowly, with a mysterious solemnity, played a song of Sebastias Bach : ‘ If thou wouldst give me thine heart,—let it come to me in secret,—Our thoughts in communion—Let no one divine them.’ My mother and the curé were sleeping ; my

brother was gazing gravely into space ; and I, spellbound with his song and his eyes, I felt a presage of the fullness which it is possible for life to hold.

“ The next morning we met in the park, and he said to me : ‘ I am writing an opera, and its principal character is within me, before me, wherever I go, wherever I stay. Never have I been in such an atmosphere, all is light, purity, brightness. Up to the present I have been like the child in the fairy story, ever picking up the pebbles, and seeing not the flower which grew in its splendour by my path.’ ”

Two years passed, “ Fidelio ” appeared, and the young girl recognised herself, in the sublime heroine of love. Beethoven often sought refuge from the world at Martonvasar, and it was there, in the spring of 1806, according to the Countess, — “ Twas then, in the month of May, that I became engaged to him, with the consent of my only and well loved brother, Franz.” But before seeking a more necessary and much more doubtful consent, it seemed wise to keep the secret and wait until Beethoven, — and one must smile, perforce, at the juxtaposition of the words, — until Beethoven should have a “ situation.” He had one, indeed, at the time, but not such an one, as was required in those days, or in fact would

be required in these, by parents of noble birth, of whom a Beethoven asked their daughter.

Four years long was their waiting ; easily, almost lightly borne by Beethoven at first, but odious, finally, and, little by little, intolerable. A terrible lover, with a heart full of anger as well as of love ; fighting against the prolonged restraint, he ended by openly rebelling, indignant with the young girl, whose patience seemed to him too serene, and her fidelity too resigned. Then, in letters and in conversation lightening began to gleam, and thunder to growl ; till at last the storm burst. But as to the immediate causes and circumstances of the rupture, the Countess Therese never broke silence. Once only, grown old and ill, she confided to her young friend : “ Dear child, there is one thing, one last thing, that thou shouldst indeed know :— the word of separation was spoken by him, not by me. . . . As he uttered it, I was seized with horror, I was as pale as death, and all my body trembled.” . . . “ The last words,” adds the confidante of the Countess, “ I could scarcely hear ; she fell back unconscious upon the cushions, and alarmed I called one of the maids, and left her.” And so came the end of this love episode, but not of the love itself, for Beethoven too, never forgot.

“ In the last year of his life,” says one of his

friends, “ I went to his home one day, unexpectedly. He was deaf and could not hear me, and as his back was turned to me, did not see me ; seated where the light from the window fell on a portrait, in his hands, he pressed it to his breast weeping, and murmuring to himself, as he did when alone ; ‘ Thou wert so beautiful, so like the angels.’ Lest I should intrude, I left the room for a time, and when I returned, found him at the piano, improvising magnificently. ‘ My old friend,’ I said, ‘ there is nothing diabolical in your face to-day ! ’ And he replied, ‘ My good angel has been with me.’ ”

Would you feign know what would have been the result of a marriage with his “good angel” ?— In 1860, a lady in the town of Gmunden, who had known Beethoven, said to some friends to whom she had been playing the overture to “ Fidelio ” : “ The model of this work, or rather the personification of Leonora, was the Countess Therese of Brunswick. She was indeed to be congratulated, but as for marrying Beethoven, that is altogether another story. A dowerless countess, so beautiful and so tender ; — a veritable breath ! And he ! Heavens ! An angel and a demon in one body. Both of them would have gone to the devil, and his genius, into the bargain ! ” Doubtless it was the truth which fell from the lips of

this most reasonable lady, and the actual ending of this love story, was also the happiest.

Thanks to the historian and critic who has placed the “Fourth Symphony” for us in the very surroundings and moral atmosphere in which it was composed! One loves to bring together in association, such a work and such a story; the latter’s pure ray, brightens and embellishes all, and thus we see that joy, and the peace of loving,—of the deepest loving, were the subject of the second movement of the symphony. But we must not go too far; let us fear, above all things, the exaggerating and forcing of the idea of a subject in music; the idea of a relation between thought and passion, between the force of the soul which expresses itself, and the force of sound by which it is expressed. And, yet, but, for the scrap of historical fact which has come down to us, we could not have known that the Adagio of the “Symphony in B-flat,” was a veritable Hymn of Love; the music alone would have revealed to us simply that more general sentiment, or state of the soul,—happiness. It tells us, indeed, that Beethoven was happy when he wrote it, happy as only a Beethoven could be, with a supreme felicity, a beatitude at once passionate and serene. Happy in a measureless desire, immeasurably satisfied; happy in that his insatiable

soul was in the way of being satiated. But if we discover the cause of this happiness, which has seemed more or less impersonal, and vagrant, as it were; if it is revealed to us, that they are winging their way, these sublime melodies, to a woman well-beloved,—a charming personality, then you will feel for yourself, after reading Mr. Grove, all that such a discovery may add to our emotions and even to our admiration!

To the "Eroica" and the "Symphony of Love" succeeds the work which with supreme appropriateness, may be named a Symphony,—that in "C-minor." It is the centre, the heart and the summit; the master has not only thrown his entire self into it, but it is Beethoven at the very height of his genius. It represents the rudest conflict and the most complete victory; more than any other of his masterworks does it express, melancholy and meditation, action and gaiety; it represents anguish, trouble, sorrow, but, higher than this, a will stronger than sorrow. Militant, suffering, triumphant, it offers to us the three characteristics of all life; it comprehends in its evolution, the stages of human destiny.

But complete and synthetic representation of Beethoven's inner self, as they are, the chiefest of his masterpieces leave, still, something of him un-

explained,— his relations with the external world. To these the entire work of the master furnishes but one witness,— the “*Pastoral Symphony*.”

These relations were close and constant ; Beethoven loved nature, and loved its every side ; a flower, a cloud, would fill him with rapture ; neither wind nor rain incommoded him in the slightest degree, and he willingly exposed himself to the elements. But for trees he felt a special tenderness. At the moment of taking possession of some apartment which had been engaged for him, he would ask the proprietor abruptly : “Well ! Your trees ?” “We have none.” “Then I’ll have nothing to do with your house ; I love a tree better than a man !” In his ears “every tree seemed to say ‘Holy ! Holy ! Holy !’” Every summer he fled to the environs of Vienna, to the wooded valleys of Hetzendorf, Heiligedstadt, Döbling, Mödling, or Baden ; often he was the guest of friends in the country, sometimes of his brother at Gneixendorf ;—“a name,” said he, “that shrieks like a cracking axle-tree.” He would leave the house at dawn,— the early morning, which he christened “The golden-lipped hour”;—“Morgenstunde hat Gold im Munde.” And, till night came, he would roam, or rather run over mountains and valleys, bareheaded, his sketch-book under

his arm. At these times, nature was his food and drink; for he feasted, in very fact, upon nature alone. One day a laborer near Gneixendorf, was bringing home a pair of oxen, which he had just unyoked, when he saw a man making wild gestures and screaming at him, while the oxen, frightened, ran down a slope, and started on a gallop to the house. The breathless rustic followed them as best he might, demanding who the crazy man was, who had frightened his beasts. When he was told that it was the brother of the proprietor, he exclaimed: "Umph! It's a fool of a brother that he has then!"

The "Pastoral Symphony," the only nature scene depicted in all Beethoven's work, and the only vision which he has vouchsafed us of the objective world, is a subjective vision as well. The inscription on the score is: "Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei," and we know how well Beethoven followed his programme and kept his promise; with the exception of the "Song of the Birds," the "Peasants' Dance" and the "Storm," the "Pastoral" is much more an expression of feeling, than an imitation of things. The feeling is simple; there is not in all the symphony, the trace of a philosophic interpretation, or of a "system" of nature: the work seeks only to translate impressions which are, at once,

elementary and immediate ; between nature and man, it interposes no doctrine, no theory.

And, more than this, the feeling is sweet ; of all Beethoven's symphonies the "Pastoral" is, beyond doubt, the least pathetic, and evokes the least violent emotion ; for the storm which darkens the scene, but for a moment, is merely an external, physical trouble, and does not reach any depths of soul. But such a soul as that of the great master, a soul as passionate, ardent and unhappy, a soul, which, in the preceding Symphonies, had been living such an intense moral life, could be thus revivified and pacified, before the spectacle of nature !

Maintenant que du deuil qui m'a fait l'âme obscure
Je sors pâle et vainqueur,
Et que je sens la paix de la grande nature
Qui m'entre dans le cœur.

Maintenant que je puis, assis au bord des ondes,
Ému par ce superbe et tranquille horizon,
Examiner en moi les vérités profondes
Et regarder les fleurs qui sont dans le gazon. . . .

All this was Beethoven capable of ; tearing himself all trembling and suffocated from the terrible embrace of the "Symphony in C-minor," he could seat himself to write the "Scene by

the Brook." Recall the melodies of the "C-minor," sharp and triumphal, and realise that the first theme of the "Pastoral," with its engaging, smiling motive, immediately succeeded these. "What conditions, and again what conditions!" Beethoven has been called a romanticist, but he is something else and something greater. See him now before nature, guiltless of anger or pride. With many another in like circumstances, he might have given himself over to accusations, or have gazed upon a nature, obscure and veiled, seen through a mist of tears; but never did he allow his sufferings to mingle in the libation which he poured out to her, ever returning to her in simple confidence, and, according to his own words: "with the delicious joy of a child." She might have said to him "my springtime cannot hear thy adorations," yet ever in the green, blossoming days, his praises poured forth in faithful homage. One of the noblest characteristics of the "Pastoral Symphony," is this disinterestedness and forgetfulness of self. The work might have been a blasphemy;—it is a canticle and a prayer. And so it is with great hearts, sorrow does not make them the enemies of natural things,—but, finding creation insensible, they pardon, nay, more, they are grateful to it for its beauty, and forbid themselves any

thoughts concerning it but those of blessing and love.

After the writing of the "Pastoral Symphony," Beethoven seems to have retired farther than ever within the recesses of his own heart. For four years he gave little to the world, and then, in 1812, in less than six months' time, he wrote two Symphonies, the "Seventh," in "A," and the "Eighth," in "F," in both of which there is shown forth an aspect of Beethoven's nature, upon which his English commentator has done well to dwell at length. Not passion, not heroism nor love, nor joy, we find here, so much as a portrayal of his habitual disposition, traits of his character, the manners of being, the very methods of his existence. The condition of mind best defined in the word humour, was one which raised him to a height of power, and finest expression. A fund of brusque joviality, a vein of wild impetuosity; an unrestrained gaiety, bursting out in unexpected sallies; an immoderate love of jokes, and facetious puns,—a mingling, in fact, of the trivial and the strong, as in the mind of Shakespeare, the same overflowing and unbridled fantasy, all this was no less the great Beethoven, than were his moral dignity, his purity and tenderness, his mastery of himself and his sublime submission. All this we are constantly meeting in

his life, in his letters and in his conversation ; all this we should look for, therefore, in his work, and it is even this that we find markedly, in certain parts of the “Seventh” and “Eighth” Symphonies.

The first Allegro of the “Symphony in A” is disconcerting in its sudden effects, and its opposing of extreme strength, and infinite sweetness ; by its unforeseen breaks in the tonality, and by the stubbornness of rhythm, which to use Wagner’s word, here celebrates its orgies ; but from this new point of view, the Finale is most of all extraordinary. Here, for the first time, there pours forth the free torrent of an unbridled fantasy, what Goethe called the unchained humour of Beethoven. What Beethoven himself called his unbuttoned humour. Recall the opening of the Finale and the formidable bursts which announce the game, — and that a very rude one. Then the first theme, “strange, unsympathetic, and furious in its inception” ; the second, sharp, bristling, wounding ; finally the “working out” of the scheme, in its access of wild mirth, which carries our imaginations to the transports of some colossus, indulging in a fit of uproarious good-humour. The giant is amusing himself at our expense ; throughout the entire Finale, there is forced on us the presence of a desire, a mania

for contradicting and annoying, an intent to shock and alarm. Nothing in all music resembles so closely the buffoonery and the grotesque of Shakespeare, as certain characteristics of this Finale: the shrieking dissonances, the implacable crushing out of the weaker time, and the atrocity of certain sixths, brutal as the blow of a fist.

And the "Eighth Symphony," that in "F" often and most mistakenly called the "Little Symphony," breathes, in more than one passage, this same rude enjoyment and terrible humour. The "Humorous Symphony" Mr. Grove calls it. To understand it thus, let us beware of feeling only the facile grace of the theme, of the first part; with judgment in abeyance, till the repetition, and development of the Coda, we see what Beethoven, in a vein of irony and sarcasm, knew to do, with a motive which was sweet in the beginning, and nothing more. With what an abandonment of fury, he hammers, pounds and bruises the theme; what titanic strokes beat it now, and again push it, as though the master were angry or amused in turn! Then listen to the graceful fancy at the end of the Allegretto Scherzando, the bit of which Schopenhauer said: "One needs only to hear it, to forget that this world is nothing but misery." Would it be possible to turn more swiftly, and with more ease,

to crush out in brutal irony, and, as it were, with a turn of the heel, a pearl so rare? Again the Finale, the most important movement of the symphony, is also the most violently humorous; it abounds in the sallies, outrageous interruptions, bursts of laughter and anger which make such a Symphony, as true to life, as is a Drama of Shakespeare.

And now the real life of the master is opened before our eyes; these symphonies betray Beethoven himself, the Beethoven whom we have tried to define; not the hero but the man, surprised in his everyday existence, in his "moods and manners." A deeply interesting light is thrown upon the man and his work; our higher feelings, indeed, and passions, the activity and energy, the arousing, of our highest moral faculties; love, joy and sorrow, the heroic struggle against destiny or the peace found in the contact with nature,—one easily conceives that these may be the occasion and subject-matter of masterpieces,—of a "Pastoral," or a "Symphony in C-minor": but that minor traits of character, minor and often evil,—bursts of burlesque humour, trivial and almost gross; that these should have been the themes of masterpieces as great, is more astonishing.

The story is well known of Beethoven's re-

ception of his brother, who had but lately purchased some property. The latter sent in his card, bearing the words "Johann Beethoven, Gutsbesitzer" (Land-proprietor)," receiving promptly in return a card, with the inscription, " Ludwig Beethoven, Hirnbesitzer" (Brain-proprietor). It is told too, how the master took great pleasure in dining informally with his old friend Brenning and haw, on rainy days, he never failed, as he seated himself at the table, to shake his dripping hat on the table cover and the assembled friends. At first glance it would certainly seem, that whatever there might be interesting, from a moral or psychological point of view, in these characteristics there could not be anything to appeal to a sense of the beautiful ; nothing which music and above all a Symphony could express. And yet peculiarities of mood and character are the foundation and moral of more than one wonderful page of the "Symphony in A" and of that in "F." The genius of a Beethoven, to whom nothing human was mean, could translate, transform, transfigure the order of common life and raise it to the order of the ideal and the beautiful.

Four years separated the "Sixth Symphony" from the "Seventh" and "Eighth"; while between the latter and his "Ninth" and last, there rolled around more than eleven years,—years of

martyrdom to Beethoven. One after another he lost his dearest friends and most faithful patrons. His brother Gaspard died, leaving a widow and a son, eight years old, whose interests and education served to engage poor Beethoven in endless quarrels and lawsuits with his sister-in-law, whom he detested. The child in the end, turned out badly, and Beethoven could but suffer and blush over his unworthy pupil. His journals and letters of this time, betray constantly a horror of his increasing solitude. "I have no more friends," he wrote. "I am alone in the world. . . . God! O God! my Guardian, my Rock, my All! . . . O Thou, Inexpressible One, lend an ear to the most unhappy of Thy children!" At last, absolute silence had settled down about him,—and Beethoven heard Beethoven no longer. As he stood up beside the conductor of the orchestra, with his back to the audience during the first rendering of the "Ninth Symphony," not a single note, not one of the wild bursts of applause reached his ears, and it was not till some one near him turned him about, till his eyes rested on the enthusiastic people, that he—alas, only saw!—the applause that was being showered upon him. In sad truth, Beethoven passed those eleven or twelve years, "in the habit of despair."

Still, if there be one word worthy of being written at the threshold of the "Ninth Symphony" it is "Hope"; for throughout the entire work, we are ever looking forward to the future and to happiness. And yet, not through the entire work, for as we have seen, the first movement of this symphony, is one of the most pathetic things which Beethoven has written. Recall, for a moment, what we said of the working-out of the theme, and of the Coda, especially the latter; that short passage, which is the sombre flower of bitterness and of melancholy unfolding its petals at the goal of a sad pathway. But this is the last cry that Beethoven permits himself, at least the Beethoven of the symphonies. He turns his thoughts now from himself to raise and widen them; he who in his blindness had asked God, in vain, for joy in himself, now asks it only for his brothers; and he, who had led the hero to victory, and conducted the dance of the peasants and their songs of thanksgiving for the storm, makes himself, now, the interpreter and mediator of sorrowing humanity. The "Ninth Symphony" is a sacrifice and a prayer, in the first of which the master seems to call together all the evils which he has suffered, that he might purchase, with this expiatory offering, the happiness of the generations

and centuries yet to come. From the point of view of art, and of the relation of parts to the whole, it may be doubted whether the last of Beethoven's symphonies is his best. A Finale in the form of a chorus can hardly be considered the logical conclusion and the satisfying crown of three great orchestral movements ; the master, himself, did not feel the Symphony to be complete, and, to the last never abandoned the idea of an instrumental Finale. Some time after the composition of this Symphony he expressed the conviction that the chorus at its close was a mistake, and spoke of replacing it with a Finale for the orchestra alone, having already found the theme. But from a moral point of view, nothing in all Beethoven's work is greater than this Finale of the " Ninth Symphony." If the highest object and the supremest miracle of art, is, as Guyau says : "to raise the individual out of himself, and identify him with all," then is this one of the sacred summits whereon a miracle is accomplished ! Here indeed, one soul, — and what a soul — has given itself for all ; here the good and the beautiful meet and mingle, and genius renders itself the servant and the apostle of the universal law of sympathy, charity and love. It was fitting that Beethoven should close his work thus, — that this soul than which none ever was more

fraternal and more generous, should forget itself, and widen out in a gracious love, which comprehended the soul of humanity itself.

III.

To comprehend and feel what Beethoven did, not only for one category of his art, but for the art as a whole ; to what a dignity and degree of power and splendour he raised music itself in and through the symphony, we will do well to compare his Symphonies with the masterpieces of his predecessors. If it is to the Motets of Palestrina that we turn, it is doubtful whether the religious master of Præneste, may not seem too uniformly religious, when placed beside Beethoven : the Fugues of Bach will be too severe ; Haydn,—Mozart, even, will not suffice us after Beethoven. Their art will give us the impression of an exquisite diversion, of a pleasure which is almost divine — and still a pleasure. Only in the art of Beethoven do we find the representation of life, or rather life itself. “Ecce Deus” may be said of Mozart,—but, of Beethoven, “Ecce Homo !” For the first time in music we find man personified, a complete, rounded personality.

Mr. Grove fixes the point at which this humanity affirms and declares itself,—in the “Second Symphony”—that in “D.” “It is the highest reach of the world, before the Revolution ; of the world of Haydn and Mozart. It was the highest summit which Beethoven could attain, before throwing himself into new and marvellous regions, where never man had penetrated before him, of which no one had ever dreamed, but which became through him, our most precious estate, and which shall bear his name to all eternity. At one and the same time, Beethoven transformed and freed art and the artist ; the musicians of the eighteenth century were commonly in the service of archbishops and princes, dancing attendance with powder, wig, sword and court dress. They passed their time in saluting their patrons, and hanging around antechambers ; they dined with the valets, and might be abused with impunity, or turned into the street with the domestics. Forced to rule their conduct by court etiquette, and to subordinate their emotions to the laws of decorum and of the fashion, it was very difficult for them in setting themselves to their work, to change their attitude towards things of the world, and to give to their thoughts and sentiments, that free and natural course, to which their condition was a continual obstacle.”

Beethoven was the first, with his rough hands, to break through all conventions, and social or worldly restraints ; indomitable and fierce, he would sooner have died, than have lived in dependence and servitude. He worked for the wages of no master ; he was the musician of no salon, court or chapel, but the musician of his own very life itself, and of his own soul ; the liberty of his position, equalled, — assured, perhaps, — the liberty of his genius.

There are two aspects or two general orders of existence, which are also the two aspects and poles as it were of music ; the one contemplation, the other action ; and of these two conditions in every degree and variation there exists no stronger musical representation than a Symphony of Beethoven. In very truth, his Adagios contemplate, and his Allegros act. Doubtless the contemplation of Beethoven differs from that of Palestrina ; — as serene at times, it is often less divine ; and yet it is religious, for there seems to fall from heaven itself an unutterable ray of consolation and of hope, in certain moments of the funeral procession of the “*Eroica*” or in the second movement of the “*Symphony in A.*” The contemplation of Beethoven has nothing in it of languor and ecstasy, no tender, pious revery ; but how profound and intense it is ! Never, before

the Adagios of this master, had music descended to mine so into the very depths of human thought. Recall any one of those slow moments, — the funeral march of the “Eroica,” the Andante of the “Fourth Symphony” or of the “Pastoral,” — the Adagio of the “Choral Symphony”; such melodies carry light or shadow, joy or sorrow, into regions where sound had never before penetrated. They discover to us new horizons, and unexplored abysses within ourselves; in the heart of each one of us, they have widened, prodigiously, the circles of Paradise and of Hell, of the realms of infinite blessedness and of infinite sorrow.

Turn now to one of the quicker movements, — to the First movement, the Scherzo, or the Finale, of some one of the symphonies; recall certain entrances, or developments, repeats or Codas, if it be only a passage like that which joins the Scherzo and the Finale of the “C-minor”: think of the many struggles of Beethoven and of his victories, of all that he has put into his Nine Symphonies of life and vigour as well as of depth and contemplation; of all in them which moves and advances, — of all which walks, — runs — flies, of all in them in fact that wills; wills with an unfaltering tenacity, baffled at times, but ever courageous, indomitable, and in the end, triumphant. You will understand then, not only what expan-

sion Beethoven has given to thought, but what energy and efficiency to action,—to the act. His genius ever proposed to itself a sublime goal, and never failed to attain it ; not without effort nor without suffering, and verily not without merit ; for surely merit, that great moral beauty, cannot be stranger to an art, where no other beauty is missing. In the Symphony of Beethoven the action now concentrates and collects itself, as in the first part of the “C-minor”; and, again, on the contrary, develops itself in grand fold upon fold, as in the First movement and the Finale of the “*Eroica*,” and in the Finale of the “C-minor.” This action is progress ; it never draws back, never turns aside, or arrests its motion ; it is constant promotion towards a superior degree of existence and of force. The melodies of Beethoven seem to participate in the nature of souls and in their vocation ; born of God, that they may return to Him, but return, clothed with an exceeding greater beauty and preciousness. Thus the symphony, as it follows its course, unceasingly adds something of beauty to the soul which animates it ; and thus it is that Beethoven ever gives back, more than he has received ; if it seems remarkable that a principle of life should live in the seven or eight simple tones which introduce the “*Eroica*,” it is no less a miracle that life de-

velops continually, and that, at the end of the symphony, we find once more these tones, come to the very fullness of their being.

From the point of view of the force which music is capable of engendering within itself, and of producing, nothing approaches a Symphony of Beethoven ; but while constituting a force,—and in this it achieves the perfection of its beauty,—the Symphony of Beethoven is also an order. The First movement of the freest and most spontaneous of all the Symphonies,—that in “C-minor,”—is from beginning to end, in perfect accord with the rules, which govern all musical composition, be it a Sonata of Haydn, or of Pleyel. “Now these rules are not in the least arbitrary ; are not the edict of some one strong will or genius, which a superior genius may one day contradict. They have resulted, little by little, from the slow progress of music out of the rudest popular songs, or since the first compositions of Josquin Des Prés and of Palestrina ; they have gradually affirmed and maintained their position, through the development and free evolution of music. Instruments have taken the place of voices, and music issuing from the portals of the church, has affiliated with the world ; but the rules have remained as firm and rigorous, as those which produce an elm or an oak,

without, in the least, constraining the liberty and splendid variety of form. At bottom, they are more than rules, they are laws." And a little farther on, Mr. Grove continues eloquently, in response to those who might be tempted to dwell unduly upon the fantasy and pretended irregularity of the first movement of the "Symphony in C-minor": "No, no,—it is not disobedience to law, which makes the "C-minor Symphony" so grandiose and so extraordinary; it is neither irregularity nor improvisation; it is, on the contrary, obedience to law, it is the original and striking character of the ideas, the direct way in which they are expressed, and the prodigious energy which sinks them deep in our hearts, warm still, incandescent and luminous, as the day in which they were forged upon the anvil; it is this which makes the "C-minor Symphony" all that it is and will be eternally."

And in very truth it is order as well as strength that makes the genius of a Beethoven or a Napoleon. It was order, as well as strength, which the old soldier heard breaking forth in the Finale of the "C-minor," and which brought him to his feet, shouting: "The Emperor!" But even his emperor was not so great as is this wonder of sound-creation; of the two worlds created by these giants among the sons of men, that of

Beethoven was the most perfect and the most divine. His is the ideal world, in which matter has no part, where evil and death have no kingship ; in the laws of which, force knows not to be unjust, blind, or criminal, and where the reign of order shall never be troubled or destroyed.

**ITALIAN MUSIC AND THE LAST
TWO OPERAS OF VERDI.**

To GIUSEPPE VERDI.

ITALIAN MUSIC AND THE LAST TWO OPERAS OF VERDI.

I.

OTHELLO.

THE compact between Italian art and truth lay broken, when Verdi, at the beginning of this century, came to heal the rupture in his "Othello" and "Falstaff." For a hundred years, indeed, the music of Italy had uttered little else than lies; joyous lies, we must confess,—of purest thoughtlessness; pardoned, because of their gay carelessness and irony; lies, always melodious, often amiable, rarely gross: burning, brilliant lies,—and yet lies! The great criminal in this affair, the more criminal because he was so great, was Rossini. It was Grétry who said of Pergolesi: "He appeared, and truth became known;" but Rossini had but to appear and truth was forgotten; forgotten for light and agreeable pretence, for vain pleasure and the facile delights of a sensation which was near voluptuousness. "Appagare l'orecchio, muo-

vere il core, ricreare lo spirito ; " of these three duties imposed upon music by Marcello, Rossini only too often neglected the two most noble. He seldom enchanted anything but the ear ; and if, by chance, he wrote such masterpieces as "The Barber of Seville" and "William Tell," appealing, not only to the ear, but to the mind and heart, yet the first of even these two operas draws its greatness from the outside, in movement and external life ; while as for "William Tell," it must ever rest as an exception, almost a miraculous contradiction, in the work of the great Italian virtuoso.

This evil seed of Rossini's planting, spread ever to a larger growth after he had ceased to cultivate art ; his followers inherited less of his genius than of his carelessness and errors, and Italy wandered always farther from the right path. Overflowing melodists, inexhaustible singers, her musicians sang as the birds sing, but, like them, to say nothing. From such an art of convention and formula, nature could reap but few advantages ; and, yet, now and again, the instinct of a Bellini, or of a Donizetti, if not their wills, conspired with her, and thus it was that the truth came to the light, here and there, through works, otherwise artificial and false ; and thus it is that "La Favorita," "Lucia di Lammermoor,"



VERDI.

“Norma,” “I Puritani,” or “La Sonnambula,” have not merited death: because in them lie sweet fragments, some accent of sincere passion, of touching melancholy, a bit of soul, and, therefore, of immortality. But a bit and nothing more. Truth revenges herself sooner or later upon that art which despises her right to reign, and she revenged herself upon Italian music. The musical art of Italy, contented with flattering the senses, ended by disgusting them, with her banal caresses, till, at last, she failed to charm even the ear. Under all her creations, so beautiful once and so rich, of Airs, Duos, Trios, and Finales, the foundation, little by little, crumbled, till, wholly unsupported, the noble forms fell away, as a drapery falls, useless, when the human form is gone.

Bellini and Donizetti were dead, Rossini was silent, and Italian music was dying of languor,—till Verdi came; when, by the puissance of that life which he instilled into its blood it revived for fifty years, and again after fifty years was reën-dowed with life by him. At the first, this new life burst forth in a sort of fury; it must needs draw long breaths of outdoor freedom before it should learn to discipline itself, and to find its place within the soul. As in Rossini everything was changed to joy, so Verdi turned all to

strength, and as the one dethroned nature by too much lightness, so the other often missed the truth, by an excess of energy. But when the genius of Verdi and the truth of nature were at one, how beautiful was the union ! Through the course of his unequal works, in "Rigoletto," "La Traviata," "Il Trovatore,"—even in "Ernani," what beacon lights he planted with his sturdy hands ! He seemed to mark the subjects, treated at that time, only as culminating points ; but marked them with a flame ; like Apollo, running from summit to summit, but, unhappily, falling, often, into the abysses which his compatriots and predecessors had dug for him at their ease. Abysses which, first "Aida," and later and supremely "Othello" and "Falstaff" have closed. These last two are the masterpieces of Verdi, by virtue of their equality and unity, wherein all is illuminated with truth ; a truth no longer contented with lightning flashes, and sudden, descending strokes ; but which is queen in a realm, free from parched deserts and quagmires, chance justice and errors. Music has been defined as the relation between sound and the soul ; to Verdi shall be rendered the praise of having seized upon the truth of this relation, and of having manifested it in its infinite grandeur and in its infinite detail.

It would seem interesting and most natural, to compare the two works which the genius of Italy, inspired by the same subject, gave to the world,—an interval of eighty years lying between. The Othello of Rossini and that of Verdi, respond to, or rather contradict one another: the one the sign of error and decadence, the other of restoration and of truth.

To begin with, the libretto of Rossini's work is nothing but a gay little prevarication; nothing, in its way, could be more astonishing, and one cannot but admire the cleverness which can extract such foolery from Shakespeare's drama; characters, poetry,—all are abased to the level of an art which has no self-respect, and to the standard of an unthinking public. Nothing is proved by it but the fact that the author of this miserable and ridiculous creation simply read Shakespeare and has never known Othello, save, perchance as a negro, who killed his wife, in a fit of jealousy. In any case, the Italian poet, the Marchesi Berio, has taken an amazing liberty with his English confrère; Cassio seeming to him to be useless, is suppressed, Roderigo being deemed sufficient for all purposes. And against this latter hero our poet of revision exasperates Othello, not by the famous, and far

too ordinary means, of a handkerchief, but by the infinitely more genteel expedient of an anonymous letter. Nothing could be more lacking in artifice,—more ingenuous, I had almost said, than the scenes between Othello and Iago ; the scene, rather, for there is but one and that a summary affair ; men did not waste their time over psychology, in that day ! “ Of all absurd librettos, surely this of Othello is the most amusing. The most insignificant romance, borrowed from nature, could inform the estimable litterateur, whom I am taking the liberty of criticising, that the human heart fights more than one battle, and is agitated by more than one doubt, before it forever renounces that happiness,—the greatest which exists on earth, of seeing naught but perfection, in the object of its love.” These are Stendhal’s words, and, truly, do not lack in astuteness.

So Othello insults Roderigo, and they fight a duel, which Desdemona interrupts. Her father then appears, in his turn ; she declares herself the spouse of the Moor, and is cursed for her pains ; far more filial in the opera than in the drama, she weeps in despair, and the chorus, deliciously named “ Coro dei confidenti ” mingle their tears with hers.

Then that last act, of which Rossini said : “ It

will live!" Of the drama, borrowed from Shakespeare, there are left but three verses,— and those taken originally from Dante. In truth, the happy quoting of these immortal words of sad reminiscence, this fisherman's song beneath the window of the unhappy child, is the one brilliant thought of the poor Marchesi Berio; let this, at least, be noted to his credit. But the rest? The rest, unhappily, is not silence; to the very end there is nothing but misconstruction and caricature. Desdemona, defying Othello, as she bares her bosom to the sword, with the air of Agrippina and her "*feri ventrem*"; all this doubtless to justify, by such show of intrepidity, the famous: "*O my fair warrior,*" of which the librettist had by chance heard. Evidently there was another quotation of which he knew by hearsay, and which he felt under obligation to translate and account for: and this is why the Moor, feeling his hand tremble, ponders as to the cause, till his eyes fall upon the candle; whereupon he exclaims, "*Eccone la cagione*" and extinguishes it. This is the fate of the exquisite passage: "*It is the cause, my soul. Let me not name it to you, ye chaste stars!*—"

Our gratitude would be excited if we could be made to forget the poem in the music, but, with the happy exception of two or three pages, the

one fatally resembles the other. Rarely lovely is the plaint of the gondolier, uniting dramatic truth with musical beauty ; rather more conventional, but still very beautiful, is the " Willow Song as well as the prayer which follows ; but elsewhere with no exception, the music merely adds its lie to that of the poetry. The one and the other unite to traduce the great human soul of Shakespeare and to parody him. Not a personage, not a character, is created by sound ; neither Desdemona, nor Othello, nor Iago exists musically ; all three sing alike and sing in vain,—notes, always notes and never personality. "Beautiful music," says Stendhal, "from every point of view but that of expression." We cannot agree with him ; these sonorous forms, let them be taken apart from the drama with which they clash, and the sentiment which they misconstrue, possess no beauty ; these melodies are continuously commonplace, the harmonies, meagre, the timbre, insignificant. When Alfred de Musset found the motives of "Othello," "Tristement frères," he spoke truer than he knew ; nothing certainly could be more sad than such a fraternity of misery. Bravoura Allegros, and languishing Andantes ; Duos with repetitions, strettos, vocalisations and fioriture, syllabic accompaniments by the chorus, — all sadly resemble

one another, and are of equal worthlessness. It is well known that, in the final duet between Othello and Desdemona, Rossini borrowed the "Calumny" motive from the "Barber of Seville"! Not intentionally, say his friends, but it may chance that they on their part mistake. It may be that the master, with an irony of intention, determined at the close of the work, to render himself a tribute of justice, and to excuse himself, with a smile, for having himself played the rôle of the great Calumniator.

But let us turn now to that other "Othello" where all is veracious and loyal to the original; where all is respect, fidelity and love. To begin with, the poet of this later work has allowed himself only the most necessary retrenchments upon Shakespeare's drama; though forced to shorten, condense, even transpose, he has never perverted or misconstrued. It is not supposable that all of Shakespeare could be crowded into the scenes of an opera; but at least, nothing is allowed to enter here, which by thought or word, is not entirely Shakespeare; nothing which is not worthy of him. Thus M. Boito delivered to Verdi none but the very souls which Shakespeare created, and these souls, living already in the words, have been revitalised into, perhaps, greater life, in the music. The notes give a sec-

ond expression of the human original, not unequal to the first ; but alike in its similarity and its beauty,—or rather beautiful, in that it is similar to the original.

We may well search out the beauty, which lies in the similarity, in the conformity of the music to the sentiments and passions of the drama,—to its soul, indeed, which in art, as in everything else, determines goal and depth. This is continually manifested in the personages of the musical drama ; the characters sustain and develop, to the end, the positions which they assume on their entrance. One need only to be attentive,—but so much must be conceded, to follow the evolution of these personalities, and to appreciate the rapid variations and numberless shades of characterisation. The work utters one long appeal for verity. Not an unbroken appeal ; for the truth, which cries out triumphantly for the most part, sometimes sighs low, almost dying, and yet it is never silenced. With what a song does it break forth, in the duet of the first act ! M. Boito has succeeded in retaining in this act, all of the Shakespearean scene in the senate and of the pleading of the Moor, which could be introduced, without retarding the movement of the main motive,—that of the loves of Othello and Desdemona. Othello, heroic—as he was to the end,

and, what he was never more to be, calm in the happy abandonment of his love; Desdemona, charming and sympathetic; their tenderness, born of suffering and pity,—all this we feel should be demonstrated in the music: and are not disappointed, in this beautiful love duet; an exquisite page, in which hope smiles, and over which hovers peace. The timbre of the 'cellos, the first grave, tenor notes, expressing fullness and intensity, show Othello's love, virile and strong; while that it is proud and warlike, clarions testify, in their turn. But Desdemona interrupts them, and another love breathes from the music, a feminine, consoling love, which is happy, in remembering less the glory, than the misery. There is not a phrase of Desdemona's which is not exquisite: one, softly carried in pure harmonies, and pious chords, which swell as from an organ; some perfume of "Aida," breathing over another, which whispers of Africa and the hot sands, where the dark lover had been a captive. And still this music is not unequivocally happy; its sweetness is veiled, its ecstasy, unquiet, and vaguely menaced. It rises from the orchestra in gusts of melancholy; like the first drops of a storm, the notes of the harps, pearl one after the other, and the star of love, which trembles in a wet sky,—that star which Othello

salutes in a voice as trembling as itself, is verily "the sad silver tear of the mantle of the night."

The second act of "*Othello*" is the most perfect bit of musical psychology in the opera, and without question the unequalled masterpiece, in its own half century of Italian music. Doubtless Verdi has written of many situations and many aspects of character, with as great power and truth; the *Miserere* of "*Il Trovatore*," the last act of "*La Traviata*," Philip the Second's air in "*Don Carlos*," testify to this; as does many a wonderful page strong in the part which it assumes and sustains; all beautiful, if not in what many called their immobility, at least in uniformity of equally diffused sentiment. But here, on the contrary, beauty is born of detail and of variety; it multiplies itself and circulates itself, as it were, through life; resting no longer in that which abides and endures, but in that which passes and changes. The subject demands this: the passion of jealousy being neither one of those which transfix the soul and paralyse it, nor of those, which, with one direct blow, precipitate it into the abyss of despair. Would you prove the truth of this, read once more the two principal scenes between *Othello* and *Iago*, or, better, go and listen to them, in Verdi's music. Here,

where Rossini contented himself with a concert duet, which the very concert itself would condemn, Verdi needs an entire act ; verifying these words of Stendhal ; “the human heart fights more than one battle.” In this second act, beautiful in its exactitude and fullness, he has painted the field of more than battle. There is conflict between Othello and Iago ; and, again, conflict in the secret of Othello’s own heart ; and of this twofold struggle, the music imitates the smallest hazards, and numberless vicissitudes. Nothing escapes its subtle power of moral representation ; it pictures the contrast of the two souls, and follows the travail of the one and the other ; it counts the drops of poison, notes the least shiver of suffering, and as in the drama, the subject is constantly renewed by poetical images, so, in the opera, it is reborn, in images of sound.

An old edition of “Othello” reads, “Iago, A Rascal,” and so he defines and analyses himself in the “Credo,” a musical commentary in which unite melodies, harmonies, rhythms and timbres. An admirable commentary of power and impious fury, at first thrown with lyric art, across the menace of the brasses, and the laughing trills : more beautiful still when the cynic ode drops into cynic meditation, anger into disgust, and when,

ever slower, deeper and more disdainful, the few notes of the principal motive disintegrate and fall to nothing.

But for this explosion, Iago's entire rôle is composed of little else than musical insinuations ; of ventures, suspended as soon as taken, of desires, trials and enticings. The recital of Cassio's dream, too, is a masterpiece of expression ; in its insidious melody, its subtle chromatics, and its thin, stifled instrumentation, noiselessly persuasive, and, beneath all, supremely eloquent. These light suggestions and delicate touches provoke, in Othello, fearful transports, and create, between cause and effect, between spark and explosion, a contrast of which music can illustrate the force and beauty, more vividly, than can tragedy itself. The fearful reaction,—and I use the word, almost in its chemical sense,—of the poisoning soul against the poisoned, is eminently within the domain of music : I remember how Rossi, playing Othello, constantly passed his hand over his breast, with a circular gesture as though following over his body the awful circuit of suffering ; and so here we feel how the motive of the orchestra, turns upon itself, and in turning, crushes and tears. Then, at Iago's least word, we see Othello bound from his seat, beside himself with pain and rage ; in less time than is spent

in the writing of it, the voice soars to highest summits, and plunges down to the depths of an abyss ; we hear chords struck strongly, blow upon blow, the soul, a prey to all the sudden changes of doubt, and to all the contradictions of folly. To the very end of this second act, these two confronted forces continue to agitate one another,—the one, hidden in impassive music, the other lashed into a musical delirium ; and as the one finds its deepest expression in the recital of Cassio's dream, so the other rises to the highest paroxysm of exaltation, in the last magnificent, poignant pages. Here do we find the brusqueries, and sudden changes in the secret sentiments of the heart, of which Taine, I believe, speaks, concerning the heroes of Shakespeare ; here, too, are : “ the frightful imagination, the furious velocity of multiplied and exuberant ideas.” We must not complain that these ideas,—and I mean the musical ideas,—are too short and too hurried ; that they pass too quickly, or that the entire act is made of details. They are dealing with life, and if, as is said, there is no science that is not general, so there is no life, above all in Shakespeare, that is not detail.

After Iago, after Othello, who would not recognise Desdemona, in this music of Verdi ? Her rôle, like her soul, has little movement and

little passion ; it is a suite of equally suave sound-forms, for the most part, simple and slow. Calm in good, as Iago is calm in evil, Desdemona differs from him in light as she does from Othello in sweetness, and the brilliant, ornate songs and vocalisations of Rossini, are less appropriate to her, than to any of the other characters. This even voice, white with innocence and purity, is essentially hers,—these phrases, always limpid, in the depths of which we see her soul. How lovely is the duet of the third act, in which the melodious flow of tone spreads in folds of such transparent beauty ; in which the perfecting of a modulation, the succession of two chords suffices to raise every veil, and discover the well of purity in the woman's heart ! “ See,” she cries, “ these are the first tears to fall from my eyes ! ” The spoken phrase finishes thus, but the musical, more logical and finely truthful, dies out in the repetition of “ the first tears ” : the significant and touching detail is not that Desdemona weeps but that these are the first tears that her eyes have known. And in the analysis of this charming soul, the music goes deeper still. While she alone is weeping, Desdemona pardons, or complains most gently, but seeing Othello weep, she grows alarmed ; the sweetness of her reproach turns to despair, and at sight of the ill of which

she is the innocent cause, she finds the depth of her own suffering.

So everywhere, be it even in those portions of the scheme, most fully treated, under the most vigorous strokes, we discover these exquisite touches ; witnesses to a keenly attentive art, which is sensible to the infinite variety of the emotions of the human heart. In the old days it was quite otherwise in music ; passion seldom assumed more than one attitude, one only, to have and to hold ; the soul was massive, and the musician painted as children do, in flat colours, without mixing or under-tints. In Rossini's "*Othello*" as an example, we need not pause over Othello himself ; he had no personality, but that of a bravura tenor. Desdemona, indeed, lives, for a little at least, in the beginning of the last act, and these few moments of being she owes to the sweet pathos of the "*Willow Song*." But how incomplete is this being, how summary this sadness, and what convention there is in this beauty ! In the first place, the Prelude, the cold, fine Andante, prepares us for nothing that follows ; even the recitatives here, are not of the slightest significance ; the gondolier passes, singing, and his passing, we cannot repeat it too often, is sublime. But why immediately after, and to the end, should the libret-

tist parody Shakespeare? Replacing with the memory and the very name of some post-mortem friend of Desdemona,—one Isaure—the memory and the name of Barbara! “My mother had a maid called Barbara,” reads Shakespeare, quite explicitly. The romance indeed of Rossini is charming,—charming in spite of the harp, which certainly spoils it a little. One of the “princes among critics,” M. le prince de Valori, asserts that the harp was the favorite instrument of Desdemona’s day,—that her own, indeed, was preserved for four centuries in the Morosini museum, and was finally purchased by a collector for the sum of a hundred thousand francs; but all this justifies but insufficiently, the introduction, at such a moment, of the ritornello;—a regulation concert-piece, in which one hears the harpist and not Desdemona. And the beauty of the romance is too uniform; it lacks mobility, that changing, undulating something, in the atmosphere of which we recognise life, and not the life of the soul, as a complete entity merely, but the breath of life, in every sentiment and passion of the soul. There are a thousand different ways of loving and of hating: a pain or a joy, is made of a thousand joys and of a thousand pains. Perhaps the degrees of sadness are more marked than those of any other moral condition; with as

much truth as poetry it was said : “ There is a sort of twilight which follows grief.”¹ And is not the twilight the most varying of all the hours of the day? It is such changes in the constant unity, and shifting shades of truth across the truth of the whole, which makes of Verdi’s “ Willow Song,” a creation so beautiful and so new. This song is not sad with the commonplace sadness of Rossini’s music ; it pulls at the heart-strings with a thousandfold more force ; as through it, we breathe, in the air of that chamber, the intangible awe of night, of fear and of death. And while the successive couplets of the elder master are scarce more than variations in vocal virtuosity, each strophe of Verdi’s surrounds and adorns itself, with what a melancholy ornament of varying emotions ! A memory, a regret, or a fresh fear. “ Cantiamo ” repeats the Italian text, almost as incessantly as the name of the drooping tree : “ Willow—willow—willow,” and each time with a new inflection and a new intention. “ Cantiamo—” Who then ? It matters not if only a song be heard ! From all anguish, from death, may Desdemona be protected ! “ Cantiamo,” she repeats with a pale smile ; let them sing who shall be living to sing to-morrow ! — “ Cantiamo,” she murmurs for the last time, and

¹ Prevost-Paradol.

the harmony is silent, as the music of the last chord falls upon the ears of her who shall sing no more.

Everywhere in Verdi's opera we are met with the truth. As it confronts us in the melody, in the chords, in the instrumentation, in every essential and specific element, we may be permitted to conclude that this music is not only true, but more musical, and more beautiful than any music born in Italy for many a year past. This does not however dispute the assertion that "Othello" is essentially an Italian work: in it Verdi has rendered, not only a brilliant service, but a brilliant witness to the genius of his people; Italian, even Latin, in this work, as he was to be in "Falstaff," by the very choice of subject. Human, living subjects, subjects of drama and of comedy, and not the mythological and legendary epic: subjects which Shakespeare had borrowed from Italy, to render them again one day, more beautiful and more glorious. So much too, without considering the fact that in these latter days we fly so willingly towards the north, and so far and so high, that Shakespeare himself seems to us almost Southern, so clear and warm is he, in mind and heart.

By virtue of more than one characteristic, this music is Italian. Melody and vocal melody is not only frequent but predominant; Italian

melody, purified and rejuvenated, yet the melody of Italy. Constantly the forms or rather the sonorous lines, develop themselves, as in the duets of the second and of the third acts, and in Othello's monologue and the "Ave Maria." Here the lines are strong in the virtues with which the Italian masters of the old days were dowered, and which those of later years sadly lacked ; — the voice takes once more its old value and authority, its immediate and veracious expression, and the accent which imposes and insinuates by turns. It is not only for the sake of singing that the characters of "Othello" sing, they would speak too, and yet even in the recitative they are ever singing ; their song now unfolding itself, in complete melodic liberty, as in the beautiful burst of sound which ends Othello's dialogue in the third act ; or again, as throughout nearly the whole of the second act, alternating with an orchestra which sings too ; and when, by chance, the song is reduced to declamation, the vibration of the voice, the bare, unadorned voice seizes upon one's very heart. Such a moment comes in the last act, after the murder of Desdemona, as Emilia calls from behind the closed door ; or, again, and more marked, in the sharp, brief alteration between Emilia and Othello : "Cassio was her lover, ask Iago."—"Iago ?"—"Iago."

—“ Fool, and didst thou believe it? Murder! Help! The Moor has murdered Desdemona!” But a few measures ; one note, one only, but redoubled with such a precipitation and fury, and upon the last syllable such a thundering burst from the orchestra, that in all the music of the stage, I know of no such beautiful, short climax.

The orchestra of “Othello” is treated no more after the German fashion, than is the voice ; it coöperates with the musical drama, but does not command it ; and always interesting and expressive in its sonorities, and the psychology of its timbres, its charm lies in them rather than in the elaboration and the combination of the motives and all that which properly speaking constitutes the symphony. Just here, however, never lay the centre of gravity and of beauty in Italian music ; the nature and tradition of Italy would forever forbid and defy such a transportation to the orchestra.

And so, though Verdi’s “Othello” defied artificial and passing formulas, it respected, and more—it restored the eternally authentic form, in which the genius of the country was born to define and concentrate itself. For, however mobile and varying the music of “Othello” may be, and however docile to passion or to recitative, it still is always formal ; and has nothing in

common with that invertebrate, amorphous art which threatens to-day to become the music of France. It possesses a complex, but definite organism: take for example its pages which in appearance seem most free; they are harmonious and established under the rule of a fixed law. A necessary and fundamental law, of proportion, order and eurythmy, to which, of its free will, the Italian mind submits, as will the French, when it acts in accordance with the independence and purity of its nature. Nothing is easier than to trace in the "Willow Song," though it floats so beautifully on a wave of presentiments and memories, the symmetry of the initial strophes; and to show how each modulation, each suspended note works for the tonal unity and reestablishes it. And what is the monologue of Othello, in the third act, if not a masterpiece of equilibrium and opposition, in two parts, which are the balance and counterpoise of one another? In the first, all is crushed down to the earth,—brutalised, as Bossuet says; in the other, all, with a sense of reanimation, struggles upwards: the one is the prostration, the other the exaltation of life and sorrow. The contrast is fine, in its freedom, logic and strength.

II.

FALSTAFF.

There is a legend that Artaxerxes, once on a time, sat receiving the homage and tribute of his subjects. As they were spreading at his feet gold and silver and precious stones, there came a peasant, offering a cup of cool, refreshing water, and the king was more grateful to him than to all the others. Like this peasant, Verdi has brought to music, satiated and gorged with riches, the inestimable gift of a thirst-quenching draught, and from the hands of an old man, a fresh spring of youth has gushed forth. So the ancient aqueduct still carries to Rome, the unrivalled freshness and purity of the “Acqua Vergine.”

“Falstaff” is a work of health, light and joy; of a life so intense and natural, that it seems no imitation, but reality,—the life which God gives, and not that which man copies or counterfeits. A work of joy;—and notwithstanding all that the defenders of a certain class of morose modern literature believe, or feign to believe, joy ever brightens one side of this two-faced old world. The most serious of the world,—Corneille, Shakespeare, Racine, Beethoven, all have desired to know and to express it. And at eighty, Verdi’s

tragic genius was seized, in its turn, with a longing for the “gioia bella,” as Mozart, one of her most ardent lovers, called the spirit of joy. As we study, we cease to wonder how the old man could feel and comprehend this joy; his conception of it is so simple; has nothing in common with a sort of metaphysical emotion, such as that of Beethoven, for example, in the Finale of the “Choral Symphony.” And far indeed is it from the complicated joy, charged with the hidden meanings, intentions and symbols, heavy and Teutonic, of “Die Meistersinger.” This is the joy of youth, the joy of the children, to whom must be likened, as well those who are fit for the kingdom of the mind, as those who are fit for the kingdom of the soul. But yet more, this joy is good, born not alone of gaiety and roguery, but likewise of kindness and good-comradeship; it knows nothing of irony and bitterness,—the smile of Falstaff is broader than that of the “*Serva Padrona*,”—and more indulgent; and if its laugh rings more clearly than that of the “*Il Barbiere de Siviglia*,” it rings, too, with a finer distinction. Compare, from this point of view, the “Basket” Finale of “Falstaff” with the famous Finale of the “*Il Barbiere*”: the beauty of this latter is of a certain fixed type, which is near stolidity when

compared with the exquisite delicacies and fine elegance of Verdi. And, finally, this joy of "Falstaff" is poetical and tender; neither love nor the appreciation of nature are absent. The spirit of "Il Barbiere" is one of dry intrigue, for Rossini's Lindoro is nothing more than a gallant, and his Rosina, than a coquette: but Verdi has mingled bells of gold with the chimes of his comedy, and often, between two bursts of laughter, there ring out deep, heart-searching tones.

The libretto of "Falstaff," like that of "Othello" is the work of M. Arrigo Boito, and again he has translated Shakespeare for Verdi, with talent, respect and love. One cannot but admire this musician-poet who is content with being the intermediary between a poet and a musician each greater than himself: and, in truth, to become inspired himself with Shakespeare, that he, in turn, might inspire Verdi, is no mean task, and to accomplish it, no indifferent honour. An honour to his heart, for such disinterested modesty is rare, and an honour to his genius, few personal creations being more worthy of admiration than this beautiful adaptation. The translator has condensed the famous comedy of "The merry Wives of Windsor," simplifying its intrigue, and plaiting its scattered strands; while,

as to the character of Falstaff, his personality has been completed by the borrowing of traits which appear, as he figures in "Henry the Fourth," but which are not salient in the "Merry Wives." Thus the Italian poem, if it tells more than Shakespeare has put in the comedy, at least contains nothing which is not Shakespearean, except, indeed, the style and the composition of the lines,—a thing, alas! which no translation can preserve for itself, from the original. Nothing could be gayer and simpler than the subject of "Falstaff." It has to do, as every one knows, with the attempts of the corpulent cavalier upon the virtue of Mrs. Alice Ford, and of Mrs. Meg Page; attempts, twice frustrated by these honest and sprightly ladies, with the aid of their neighbour and friend, Mrs. Quickly, and of Anne, Mrs. Ford's daughter. Two rendezvous vouchsafed to Sir John, are both turned to his confusion: the one, at the house of Mrs. Ford, ending in the famous ducking in the Thames; the other, a fantastic mystification, by night, under the legendary oak of Herne in the park of Windsor, terminating in the masquerade and the cudgelling of the culprit, till he confesses his sins, and a final reconciliation is brought about. Nor must we omit the love-making of Anne and young Fenton, gracefully blended with the comedy,

and crowned, at the end, with the customary bliss.

The music of "Falstaff," may be considered and admired under three principal aspects : the action or movement, the portrayal of the characters, and the poetry ; such are the elements, and principal factors, as it were, which concur in the complex beauty of the work,—a beauty which is revealed, step by step, in the study of the score.

First the action. The exercise of this function had been forbidden to music, till she seemed no longer capable of attempting it : "she has nothing to do with movement," they vied with one another in repeating, who vied with one another in shackling and paralysing her limbs. They had anchored together the art of Haydn and Mozart, and Rossini. But behold a master of eighty years who cries to music : "Arise and walk !" And she rises and runs with the abandon of twenty summers. And what a career from the very beginning she points to us ! With Verdi there is no false start ; he never prepares to begin ; but begins with one stroke,—a thundering chord. The door opens wide ;—nay, it flies open with a burst. The introduction, the quarrel of Caius with the two acolytes of Falstaff, treated in the style of a classic "Quatuor," leads off in

rapid time ; the principal motive throws out brilliant touches, here and there, kindling a flame in every corner of the orchestra, and circulates, bounding and rebounding, increasing in brilliance and force at every leap ; striking first one instrument and then another ; nowhere arrested, stifled or tamed, sharp as hail, attacks, retorts, abuse, rattle down. And the impassive Falstaff, squares himself back in his chair, interposing between the parries and the thrusts, phlegmatic phrases, beneath which the orchestra finally quiets down, suddenly grown thin, till, dismissing Caius, he stays alone with the wags. And now his character is pictured for us ; body, mind, soul are given. First the body : " Within this drum of mine," he cries, " a hundred voices thunder out my name ; " while to these inner voices, all external harmony immediately responds. Measure by measure the orchestra dilates, veritably grows big, as harmonies and sonorities fortify one another. " Falstaff the immense ! " roar the two companions, and suddenly it is no longer he alone, whom we see, but the whole race of lusty corpulencies, Gargantuanas and Sanchos ; it is the power of matter, the apotheosis of the flesh, which the piercing acclamation pictures, after the manner of a painting by Jordaëns. But soon the mind emerges

from this confusion ; and what a precision and agility there is in the confidence, with which Falstaff relates his amorous rencontres and gallant designs. The symphonic foundation is a rich woof, on which is woven the embroideries of the dialogue, full and broad, yet light, and, when it is necessary, deeply serious. The monologue on honour, possesses depths of psychology, in which there reveals itself, to them who know to seek for it, a profound understanding of Shakespeare. In these bursts of anger and these disdainful silences ; now in the fullness of sound and now in the void, into which there fall a few scattered notes, Falstaff's perfect portrait is drawn for us ; with his cynical gusts of fury, with his insolent irony, with his contempt,—disgust, almost, of himself, and of his kindred spirits.

The picture which follows has a fascination for ear and mind : it fixes itself upon the memory, bursting, like some display of fireworks, into melodies, harmonies, rhythms and tones ; the flowering into music, of the imagination and genius of youth, one would feign believe. It is an unexampled succession at the first, and later, a combination of the nine gossips and tattlers—four women and five men. First the women show Falstaff's billets-doux, reading and

laughing over them; this beginning, with a pleasant motive on the English horn, interrupted and repeated in tonalities which are more and more clear and charming; and, finally, perfecting itself in such a climax, as only Verdi to-day knows how to create as the crown a vocal period. A male quintette links itself with the women's quartette, in a different rhythm and tonality: ideas, movement, sonorities all are incessantly renewed. Not a void occurs between the various episodes, but rather, brilliant transitions, musical and scenic; bright, tense threads which bind the necklace. The interlude of the young lovers is delicious, as is the stolen kiss, the sweetness of which is prolonged into the farewell, taken as they fly.—Again the two groups of gossips unite, and the quartette and quintette, both rapid and syllabic, run together, enveloping one another, in a balancing of harmony; whilst, alone in the midst of this babbling, the voice of the tenor traces, in holding tones, an ideal line, about which the other voices hover. At the last, the men retire and the women, who in this comedy, at least, always have the last word, once more pour out their gay defiant laughter, at the expense of the seducer, whom they are resolved to deny.

Quite different in style are the two duets, of

which the following scene is composed ; the one between Mrs. Quickly and Falstaff,— the other, between Falstaff and Ford. Mrs. Quickly, in the name of the two ladies, comes to invite Falstaff to visit them ; here, the music changes its language, and it is no longer in the rapidity of the rhythms that it seeks and finds its spirit, but in the intensity of certain notes, full of a rich sap of meaning, and in the savoury brevity of certain formulas,— even exclamations. But the charm is ever present, too, in the grace and agility of the “From two until three” triplets, from which the musician, in the course of these two duets, has drawn the brightest and most spirited of symphonies. Gladly would we pause at the duet of Falstaff and Ford to praise its musical plenitude, its psychologic verity and variety, its melodic and instrumental marvels, and especially do we note that motive, at once comic and dainty, upon which the two gossiping old men at the threshold pay one another their respects. But we must hasten on to the brain and heart of the work.

The gay ladies have prepared all for their malicious revenge ; everything is in readiness, even to the screen, and the linen-hamper, in which the corpulent Falstaff shall soon be driven to hide himself.

Gaje comari di Windsor ! E l'ora !
L'ora d'alzar la risata sonora !

So the merry women sing, in the Italian, and all the nerve of the comedy thrills through this song to the glory of laughter, the beautiful, golden laughter of women. To honest laughter and a mirth which savours of high company ; for in the sparkling trio, that phrase in the minor, as exalted as the major is ordinary, ennobles the gaiety, and reveals the women to us, good as well as clever. And does it not strike you that Verdi here resembles Molière, as well as Shakespeare ? No longer merely a master of lyric drama, he shows himself in " Falstaff," to be a master of the human heart. Never before had he read so deeply or so keenly in that book, and the most marvellous progress of his genius, is that which he has made, in the knowledge of the soul. Verily he, who found it so possible to represent in sound, this company, gaily and honestly amusing itself, in its bourgeois setting ;—this author of a musical comedy of characters and customs, is capable of the score of "Tartuffe." This is the table of Elmire, at which Mrs. Ford seats herself to wait for Falstaff ; and it is with the honesty and maliciousness of the "femme d'Orgon," that she receives him. Listen to her response to the declarations

of the gallant : a coquette, indeed, she is, but with a frank coquetry, quite sure of itself. The musical phrase resembles very closely, a certain phrase of Desdemona's as she accosts Othello ; the same purity, smiling here, tearful there ; the two aspects, the one happy, the other sad but of an equal beauty. And what a gem in the crown of music and of psychology, is the famous little Scherzetto : " When I was page to the Duke of Norfolk's grace ! " The charming melody possesses a plastic form, that we may isolate, as it were, and study from all sides. This is the music that is not becoming, but that is ; it does not escape, but remains. And here again we find the real Falstaff, with his airy wit, his fatuity ; yes, and his regret, too,—in two or three grave notes, from a furtive flute ;—his regrets, for a youthful slimness, gone, and, finally, his elegance born of the race and blood of a Shakespearean gentleman, which even disorder and debauchery could not completely debase. But in the very midst of the duet, Mrs. Quickly springs up, announcing her husband, and Falstaff has but just time to squat behind the screen ; and this is the centre and heart of this masterpiece,—the " hamper " Finale. Everything in it is admirable ; the intensity, the life, proportions and order ; a perfect order, for in all the vertigo there is eurythmy, and in the

whirlwind, harmony. Two principal motives run through the orchestra, the one, of sharply picked-off notes, the other, on the contrary, of held tones, turning in a wild spiral, which reminds one somewhat of the Finale of Beethoven's "Symphony in B-flat." It is along this second motive that the mad pursuit runs its course.

Enter Ford with his companions, and the chase begins, the rushing theme leading them on excitedly; it is the music which runs ahead, carrying Ford with it. Back and forth he darts, and in and out, through doors, burst furiously open: with a bound he leaps up the stairs, turns the furniture up side down, throws open trunks and drawers, and finally tears out of the house in search of the corpulent enemy who is not to be found. The latter profiting by a moment's calm, cowers down in the linen-basket where the women pile the clothes over him; and instantly the young lovers take their place behind the screen, where, in the short quiet, we can hear them singing charmingly. But suddenly the mob of pursuers bursts in, taking up the chase again, while the motive, too, once more rings through the whole orchestra, and prodigious is the effect of the rude shock which unexpectedly shakes the symphony.

At length, breathless, the music halts a second, and from behind the screen, comes the sound of

a kiss : Ford and his crowd, believing that they have at last caught the culprits, quiet down and discuss concerted action ; and now the beautiful ensemble can develop itself at ease, missing little of dramatic truth. The sighs of the smothering Falstaff emerge from the basket, which the women try to hide, with spread skirts, and coaxing voices, supple and soft as the skirts themselves. Whilst from the folded screen, the asylum whence the two young people ignore or have forgotten altogether the surrounding brawl, flows up the exquisite song of their tender affection. With its kindly delays and delicious pauses, this music is more than the music of comedy and fictitious characters : like all art, risen to a certain height, it acquires an added strength of general, even universal sympathy. It becomes the music which belongs to each one of us, when we are gay and love,—the music of all gaiety and all love. At last Ford, with trembling hand, pushes aside the screen, and—behold ! Instead of his wife and Falstaff, it is Nannette and Fenton whom he discovers ! At the new deception, with an added fury, and a fresh burst, the chase begins once more. Then the valets, called in haste by the women, seize the basket, the heavy weight of which we hear in the orchestra ; they weigh it, raise it, and hoist it to the window-

sill, where they hold it suspended, while a certain trill of the horn expresses comic terror. At this moment, Ford reappears, beside himself; he sees,—comprehends,—and the revenging ducking brings to a close one of the most lively scenes that music has ever created,—music, which possesses the supreme art of picturing life.

But life,—that is the complete life, which it is the mission of a masterpiece to represent, is not all in action: dreaming, too, has its part and hour therein. Well did Shakespeare know this, and this it was that determined him to end after a poet's fashion, that one of his compositions which Montégut has rightly called: “the freest of his comedies.”—“Issuing from this imbroglio,” the critic goes on to say, “we should cry for air, if the poet, seemingly foreseeing this desire of his readers, had not suddenly circulated a fresh breeze through the scene, by transporting the conclusion of the piece, to the park of Windsor; and by finally crowning it with the romantic legend of Herne the hunter.”

And the musician, too, has foreseen this longing of his hearers, and the ardent life of the work calms, towards the close, refreshing itself in the quiet of nature, and its nocturnal enchantments. The perfecting of our pleasure demanded this, as did the complete drawing of the personages of

the plot, that, to their other graces, might be added the last grace of poetry, and to their spirit, a vague tenderness for material things. A light emotion which saves, from the commonplace, the idea of a comedy, and a mystification which mingles itself therein: Alice's burst of laughter, for instance, interrupting the fantastic legend of the Sable Hunter; light, and yet a real emotion from which those charming spirits of youth, neither could nor would free themselves. Listen to the gentle girls making ready for the masquerade: "Thou shalt be a Dryad . . . thou,—a nymph of the woodlands." The gay voices are laughing but beneath the mirth, it needs but an arpeggio of the flute, to open the serene perspective of the night, the quiet meadows and the woods. All succumbs to this serenity of nature; in the moonlight of the royal park, the youthful lovers arrive first at the general rendezvous, beneath the haunted oak; as, through the shadows of the old forest trees, sounds the hunter's horn. On all the gaiety of the day, falls gently down the quiet of the night, and the boy, his heart penetrated by the beauty of the horn, sings with a new, lingering slowness. What can he not sing into the Italian of that beautiful sonnet which, indeed, defies all translation but that of music? Surely there is no

line of song purer than this; no melody which through each note, exhales more of poetry and love. On and on, it follows its exquisite curves, with never a repetition, while beneath it group the echoes which it awakens, and which softly surround it. Soon a counter melody responds timidly to it, and feeling itself no longer alone, it vibrates with joy, in a mysterious accord. The notes meet one another, as do the lips, whose desire they sing: “*Bocca baciata non perde ventura!*”—is the device and as it were the open sesame of the love, for the sweet sake of which Nannette and Fenton had been in the habit of meeting. Once more they exchange the password, and the orchestra, which was wont to pause and listen to them, accompanies them now, and throws them into one another’s arms.

And now begins the mystification, as, around the frightened Falstaff, circles a very fairyland of music, of which “Oberon’s” Weber and the Mendelssohn of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” might be jealous. We would feign recall it all: the far-off call of Nannette, in which voice and orchestra form together such new and exquisite chords; the Canzone itself, in a description of which one would exhaust, in vain, all the subtleties of the Shakespearean vocabulary; the diminishing cadences, soft as velvet, and the

phrasings, fading so slowly, as though the voices could not resign themselves to oblivion.

Again the comedy assumes its rights. “*Apotheosis!*” cries Falstaff, sneered at, beaten, but content; and a wonderful Fugue of ten parts, with solid, deep basses, in the sumptuous, Italian style, carries the masterpiece to its completion, in transports of joy. We are at the end, and yet we seem, as yet, to have said nothing,—above all to have left untouched the depth, and unsurprised the essence, of this music. We must, perforce, forego here all technical study of its beauty, and analysis of its pure form, treasures of harmony, melodic quality, details of rhythm and instrumental colouring. Before the open “*Falstaff*,” one could devote an entire article to the psychology of timbres: while, as for the melody, it pervades in a peculiar manner these harmonies; lying in abundant, brief phrases, sown broadcast, like a fine dust of sound. Yet the detail never absorbs the whole; the genius of the master multiplies but never dissipates itself, and, constantly, across this sonorous “dust” there falls a brightness of sunshine, in which the millions of circling atoms form but one long ray of light. And thus the work is at once powerful and delicate; a work of constantly changing conditions and yet, a work of great depth and no-

bility. And still more, it is formal and sane ; gaily it sounds the long-hoped-for *reveillé* of the Latin genius. "Music," said Nietzsche, "must be Mediterraneanised." Not all music, perhaps, and yet it is an added charm of any harmony, that it may be called the music of the Mediterranean. "Falstaff" as well as "Othello" is fundamentally classic,—classic in the Italian style, but under a new form ; and the Verdi of both, while he is a child of his own times, is ever a child of Italy. Back, over the heads of those masters who have compromised the national art he extends a hand to those who founded it ; for his work is more a restoration than a revolution ; by the trees of his native river, the grand old man has hung his harp, and lo ! Those trees have miraculously burst forth into a new bloom ! What all those, who would raise men, have done for the sciences, for philosophy, and all the orders of human, mental development, Verdi has done for music. In this chosen art of his, he has corrected imperfections, and disowned errors ; he has suppressed illegitimate constraints and obstacles, while ever guarding from extinction the essence, — the pure spirit of music. Seeking, on the contrary, for nothing but its growth, he has thus, in these, his later works approached, nearer than ever before, to absolute truth and absolute beauty.

THREE SYMBOLIC OPERAS.

THREE SYMBOLIC OPERAS.

THREE celebrated operas: “*Der Freischütz*,” “*Robert le Diable*” and “*Tannhäuser*,” represent the eternal lot of man,—the eternal struggle, which the angel and the beast wage within man’s soul. Of these three representations, “*Der Freischütz*,” is without doubt the most naïve, and, in a sense, which we shall endeavour to prove, the most natural; again “*Robert le Diable*” is the most concrete and proscribed, and “*Tannhäuser*,” the widest in its reach, the most exclusively spiritual in its effects,—the most Christian in its teaching.

Every page of “*Der Freischütz*” bears witness to its symbolism, and the assertion that everywhere its music overflows the bounds of its poetry, is not open to argument. Neither ear nor heart can mistake the import of the very first song, the first cry of Max. This is no mere peasant, an unhappy huntsman, who suffers in despair; these beautiful imprecations, these sorrow-laden, angry melodies are pregnant with an infinity of soul and of humanity. Already Max is the man, destined to be the hero of pride, ambition and desire. We know him for him-

self in the Trio of the first act ; in the phrases, too, melancholy or violent, of the air which follows ; and, in the second act, with still more grandeur and fierce asperity, in the Trio with the two young girls, and in the scene in the Wolf's Glen.

But who are the powerful enemies against whom we see this man struggle ? What adversaries within him fight out that combat which the entire opera depicts ? A combat, the Alpha and Omega of which is suggested in the Overture, and the phases and vicissitudes of which are marked in alternate, symmetrical, pictures. Just here lies what, for want of a better term, we have denominated the Naturalism of "Der Freischütz." For good and evil, in this opera of Weber, are manifested in and through nature, by an external and entirely material order or disorder, by the beauty or the horror of things, rather than emotions ;—in a word, outside of man, rather than from within him. Whatever sins Max may have committed, he is far less culpable than Tannhäuser ; is guilty of a fault less formulated and as it were, less profound. In the very midst of the sorceries of the Wolf's Glen, evil seems not to gain a great hold upon him ; he is agitated by a curiosity and restless ambition, but he already experiences the fear, and none of the delights of wrongdoing. He is within the

boundaries of the kingdom of sin, but his soul has not yet sworn allegiance ; and if he has indeed called the powers of Hell to aid in the gaining of his desire,—yet the object of that desire, his pure love of a pure maiden, is quite above and outside of that kingdom of evil. Thus sin is only a means to the hero of Weber ; to Wagner's knight, it is the goal and crown.

And the conception of good in “*Der Freischütz*,” bears a character even more external, and an aspect nearer to nature than does the evil. In the very outset, the Overture opposes to all restless trouble, the peace and beauty of material things,—a landscape and the notes of a horn, from the green depths of the forest. As we recall Max's famous air, does not the beautiful melody : “*Durch die Wälder, durch die Auen*,” seem to follow the feverish recitative, with a cool breath from the prairie and the forest? And later when Samiel has wandered into the background, when the sky, for a moment, is veiled, and with it the heart of the young man, only a clear note from the oboe is heard, and, lo! It is the sky rather than the soul which most visibly lightens,—as the sun smiles down upon the house, on the threshold of which the heart's desire of the huntsman sits dreaming.

And, this innocent Agnes, the gamekeeper's

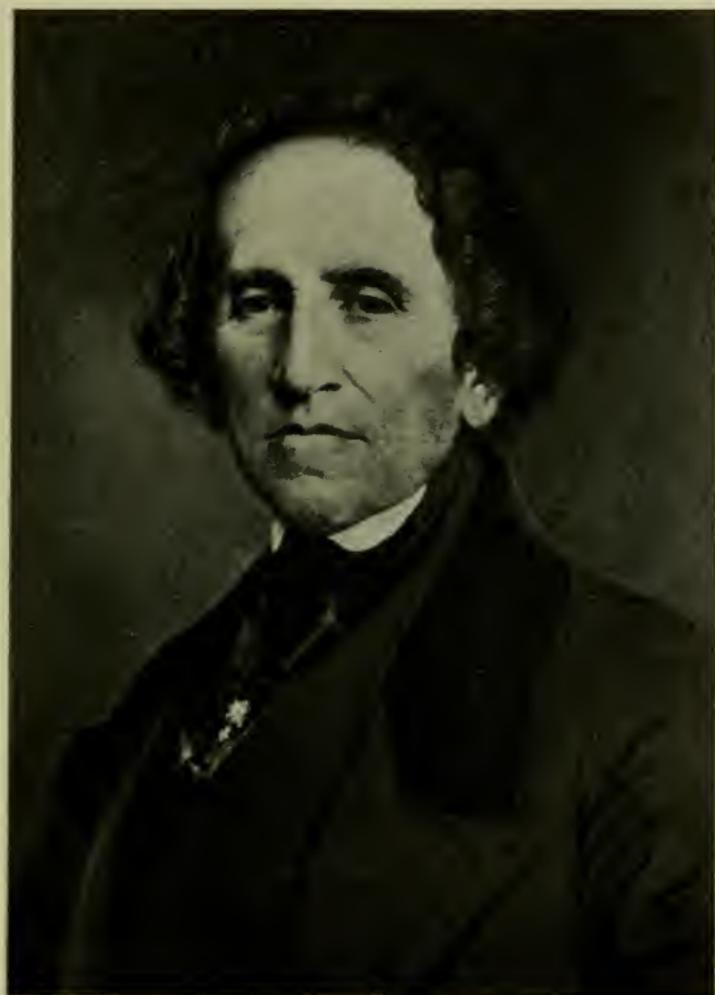
daughter, is everywhere associated with the scenes and the impressions of nature ; the two celebrated airs which may be said to be her rôle, seem to be bathed in atmosphere ; the one in the shades of the twilight, the other in the brilliancy of the dawn. For Agnes is nothing but a peasant girl, a child of the forest ; a figure, if we may venture to so express ourselves, of the external world, rather than of that moral world, of which Elisabeth was, one day, to be the incarnation. External is indeed the best term wherewith to describe the good and evil of "Der Freischütz," the salvation and the perdition ; but let us beware of reading into the word an inferiority, and of using it as the synonym of the mediocre and superficial. For, though the salvation of these pages is only that of sunlight ; and their joy not one of a holy life, but of the very intoxication of a perfectly healthy life, in the midst of a healthy nature, still this is no less joy and salvation ; an ideal, primitive when compared with Wagner's conception, and yet an ideal. If having heard "Tannhäuser" yesterday, you should listen to "Der Freischütz" to-morrow, you would respond with a fresh affection to the beauty of things, rather than of souls ; and, in the simplicity of the life of nature, you, who had been subjected to the overwhelming power of the inner and

moral life, would experience a delicious sensation of refreshment and of repose.

Some ten years after the appearance of "Der Freischütz," "Robert le Diable" once more challenged the difficult question of good and evil. This opera, too, is symbolic, and its work the evidence of a thought deeper than the work itself. "This expression,—'the philosophy of Art,'" wrote Blaze de Bury, "an immense word, in very truth, serves marvellously well, nevertheless, to characterise the genius of Meyerbeer. A genius capable of creating certain effects, which an ordinary musician would never know to produce. Take for instance, an Italian, and set him to writing a musical score for the trio of 'Robert le Diable,' and what would he see in it? . . . A dramatic situation, an effective opportunity for tenor, soprano and basso; but, as for this magnificent resumé of an entire period of history, as for this solemn picture of a man set to struggle between an Angel and the Spirit of evil,—rest assured that he would never think of all this for an instant. The music of Meyerbeer is the work of a musician of the first order, and moreover that of a thinker. For whilst possessed of many ideas, he never loses his grasp upon the supreme Idea."¹

¹ "Meyerbeer et son temps," by Blaze de Bury.

A just criticism,—for the idea is present in this music, and yet, unhappily, as much is withheld as is disclosed ; and the work fails to attain its highest possible development. In adjusting it to his genius, essentially concrete and scenic, and to his art, wholly in relief and external, Meyerbeer has dramatised the symbol ; has, perhaps, contracted it, to its belittling. He has created individuals and not types, and has placed Robert between two persons, rather than between two principles or forces. Bertram, for example, is a beautiful and, doubtless, an immortal figure ; that the demon should have a son whom he loves, and whom, in loving, he can only lose, is an idea of most dramatic beauty. In this diabolic paternity there is an imitation and, as it were, a grandiose counterpart of the Divine paternity ; and all this Meyerbeer has magnificently expressed. Read the rôle of Bertram, especially in the first and fifth acts ; not one passage but is a cry, a movement, a transport of infernal but sublime tenderness. And, still, consider that this tenderness, in characterising the personage, weakens and, for a little, contradicts the idea of evil,—of absolute evil, which it should symbolise. To make Robert the passionately-loved son of Bertram, is to furnish the indecision and trouble of the young hero and his leaning, towards the abyss of



MEYERBEER.

evil, with the excuse, almost the justification, if not of piety then of filial pity.

And the genius of Meyerbeer remains just so concrete and formal, to the final Trio, which is a masterpiece in spite of a certain weakness. The will of the dead mother produced at a favourable moment, a clock striking the hour of midnight, natural elements, and external causes, decide the issue of the struggle ; and the seizure, as it were, of Robert by Alice, assures the material victory of good. And this good, what is it ? What is the outcome of the combat ? The love of the insipid Isabelle, “that typical ‘princesse d’opéra’” and Robert still trembling, and hot with the breath of Hell, waiting beside the nuptial prie-dieu, at the grand altar of the cathedral of Palermo !

It must be acknowledged that the Idea of “Tannhäuser” is quite of another conception and of another grandeur. Wagner might well ask and reply here, with Corneille’s Polyeucte :

“Y va-t-il de l’honneur ? Y va-t-il de la vie ?
— Il y va de bien plus !”

Of the three operas in which the Angel and the Beast are at war, “Tannhäuser” is that in which both are respectively, most angel and most beast.

As to the Beast. Wagner was the first who dared to actually unchain it; for what is its figuring in "Der Freischütz," but an hour's rendezvous with the spirits of the abyss,—the participation, for a night, in the sorceries of the Wolf's Glen? And what was it for Robert but a fleeting kiss, pressed with trembling lips, on the icy shoulder of the abbess, risen from her tomb? But in "Tannhäuser" we shudder, no longer at the mysteries of nature, but at the more terrible mysteries of the soul. No more enchantments here, no more sinning beneath the cold fingers of witchcraft; this is sin, of and for itself, desired and willfully chosen; sin, no longer outside of a man, but within him, holding victoriously the very stronghold of his being. And what sin? Alas that most devouring of all! Sensuality and luxury, all the fury and all the folly of the flesh and the blood; as a Christian philosopher said: "of the body, which in so short a time, may be naught but an holocaust for the fires of hell."¹

The good, too, in "Tannhäuser" is neither external nor material; its joy is not terrestrial, and, as its evil is sin, so its good is salvation,—eternal salvation. This is not an opera which finds its climax in a happy marriage; from the very outset of the Overture, it is no longer nature,

¹ "Connaissance de l'âme," Vol. 2nd. Père Grétry.

but faith which sings, and it is the melody of pilgrims, and not that of the forest, which enchanters our ears. And yet, nature is not absent from the drama ; she coöperates with the spiritual, is the source even of emotion and beauty ; but in assuming herself, meanwhile, a something spiritual and moral, and in colouring herself with a reflected light of piety. The song of the shepherd boy mingles itself with the chorus of the pilgrims ; the whisper which brings Tannhäuser to his knees is a breath of the spirit and at the same time, of the spring ; and Wolfram, in the last act asks of the Evening Star only that it will salute, in his name, the soul of Elisabeth as it enters heaven.

This last act of “Tannhäuser” is the most beautiful of the three in that, here, the two forces of the drama are brought to a climax, meeting and confronting one another; in other words, this act is, at the same time, a sublime opposition and a sublime epitome.

The symphony of sin, as we may call the gathering together of the “Venusberg” motives,—is more beautiful in the third act than in the first. For one reason, because it is shorter ;—the Bacchanale which introduces the entire work, and the following scene between Venus and Tannhäuser wear excessive proportions ; every element over-

flows its boundaries, and, by very effort of extreme enjoying, one ceases to enjoy melody and harmony and extraordinary instrumentation. While at the close of the work, everything collects itself to deal one thundering blow, as, in a few short pages, all the forces of this music give one another rendezvous. At the first, it is analysis,—at the close, synthesis. But contrast, as well. Tannhäuser has finished his magnificent, useless recital. He has told, across the panting orchestra, of the fatigue and agonies of the way, and of his wounded, tortured feet; how his penitent lips had closed themselves against the fresh streams, and how his eyes had refused to see the sweet Italian sun. He has spoken, as the pious themes rang out their praises and the motives of anger and malediction roared their curses, of his arrival at Rome, his confession, his repentance ; of the pontiff, implored in vain, and of the pardon, which for him, alone, should never more descend. Then, as the last harmonies of mercy and salvation, indulgent to others, but pitiless to him, lost themselves in the night,—then, with one awful spring, Tannhäuser throws himself down into the evil, “and the last state of that man was worse than the first.” Once his soul had melted at the song of the pilgrims, and under the April sun, bowing in what Wagner himself called, “an aw-

ful contrition," and above a lightening stroke of the orchestra, he had cried :

"All' mächtiger, dir sei Preis."

But now, more sublime perhaps, than was the cry for salvation, is this cry of perdition. Every motive of sensual luxury tugs at his heart. Who has not been enveloped in the phrenzy of that "Venusberg" symphony, its transports, its tremours, and its torturing delights! But let us transfer our thoughts for a moment to the Wolf's Glen of "Der Freischütz." Recall especially its entering theme : the deep, holding tones, the slow descent of the basses, the sad tremours and the psalmody, which falls in regular, heavy notes. This music is as mysteriously dark, as damp, we might almost say, as the night ; and cold as death. Wagner's music, on the contrary, is hot as life,—impure life : "Im Venus verdrangen wir ein!" and the tragic beauty of these motives lies in their return, and in that they signify a second fall, worse than the first ; evil chosen for the second time and for eternity, by impenitence and despair.

If now, from the depths of the abyss, we turn our eyes above to the heights, we shall see them rise very high and very pure : "I believe in the communion of saints, and the remission of sins."

The third act of "Tannhäuser" might bear this superscription, for it is nothing but the transposition into the order of beauty,—the transfiguration by the splendours of poetry and music, of these two verities of faith. And here, the double aspect of the work, to which we drew attention at the beginning, discovers itself; its Christianity and its interiority. As you gaze on Elisabeth, wrapped in her white veil, her knees bent in prayer, remember her sisters beneficent, and protecting,—the friend of Robert, the love of Max; and the three heroines, these three gentle workers of grace and salvation, will appear to you as shining in three very unequal degrees of influence. The charm of Agnes lies in what she leaves undone; she interferes in the drama, neither by act, nor intention, but rather through a strange, secret dominance, emanating from her love and purity. She is ever grave and dreaming; responds to her laughing cousin only in songs, which are nearly akin to sighings, and never can she watch the night fall down, without a frightened melancholy creeping over her soul. She listens to the lightest breath which stirs, to a falling leaf, to the stream, which weeps as it hurries away, to the bird who taps his beak against the fir-trunks,—to every far-away sound, which comes to her ear like faint music in the silence of the

night. She vaguely divines a mystery in the nature which environs her with its powers, occult, perhaps inimical; and, that she may preserve him whom she loves and awaits, she prays. But, when once the day has broken, her childish fear is forgotten, and her morning prayer is as serene, as her evening cry was troubled. And yet Agnes the maiden, who knows no evil, resembles, in a far-away likeness, that other maiden, Elisabeth, who knew and pardoned and redeemed sin. Singular correspondences lie between the two figures; for example, in the beginning of the third act of "*Der Freischütz*" and of that of "*Tannhäuser*," after a second act in each opera of dramatic movement, the prayer of Elisabeth and the second air of Agnes, produce a like restraint upon the advancing evil. And in the last sudden turn of fortune in "*Der Freischütz*," I should be tempted to find a presentiment of the great idea of expiation, and a rough draught as it were, of the sacrifice which Elisabeth should one day consummate.

Agnes is innocent; Alice is active. She neither dreams nor lapses into sentimentality, or German mysticism; in her, we have a heroine purely French. Quite fearless, she bravely fronts the demon; foot by foot she struggles with him,—would struggle body to body, at need,

and to vanquish him she utilises material, quite practical, weapons. Till, having saved her young master, she sees him married and departs with her own loved one.

Alice is disinterested; but Elisabeth renounces and redeems. Gives herself, and dies that he whom she loves may live eternally: of the three women's figures which we have recalled to the memory of eye and ear, hers is the most beautiful,—the most nearly divine. Yet human and living too;—much more so than the Senta of “*Der Fliegende Holländer*,” whose love for her wandering Dutchman, is almost too imaginative and fantastic, in its strangeness of possession and of suggestion; more so, perhaps, even than Brunnhilde, whose wonderful personality does not always entirely free itself from the mythologic and cosmologic environment which stifles it. Indeed, if, as we have been taught to believe, redemption through sacrifice is higher than knowledge through pity, (*durch mitleid wissend*), then may we not venture to assert that Elisabeth is greater even than Parsifal, and that, in all the work of Wagner, she is the most real and, at the same time, the most ideal personification of Christian renunciation?

In his famous letter to Frédéric Villot, shortly before the representation of “*Tannhäuser*” in

Paris, Wagner wrote : “ You will find the full force of the developed action of ‘ Tannhäuser ’ in its interior motives. There the final catastrophe is born, without the slightest effort, in a lyric and poetic struggle, in which nothing but the most secret moral dispositions lead to the dénouement ; and in such wise that the very form of this dénouement rises from a purely lyric element.” It is in this last act that the inferiority of the work, and especially of Elisabeth’s rôle, is most apparent ; I very much doubt whether, in any other drama, musical or otherwise, all sensible ties are so quickly and brusquely broken, as between these two principal characters. Once only do Elisabeth and Tannhäuser meet,—that is, face to face, and that, in the duet of the second act ; from the moment when Tannhäuser, glorifying the delights of Venus, throws his sin, like an insult, in the face of the young girl, she never speaks to him, never looks at him again. Having blessed for a moment, with her pure eyes, that sullied head over which hangs the avenging sword, she turns away ; her glance forever more to be turned within, as she descends, deeper and ever deeper, into that profound quiet, where are consummated the last mysteries of the soul,—those of condemnation and of salvation.

The spring has come, then summer, and now

autumn reddens the forest of Wartburg, and bares the saddened castle walls, the very name of which signifies : “ wait ! ” The curtain rises, and discovers Elisabeth, praying in silence, while Wolfram, tender sympathiser in her sorrow and her prayer, watches her, in a silence almost as complete. The band of pilgrims, returning from Rome, appears, and Elisabeth, at their approach, rises and gazes at them intently. Slowly they pass before her,—they are gone, and Tannhäuser was not among them ! “ And now her long silence is broken, as with one terrible cry, she falls on her knees. The pages which follow are the capital pages both of her rôle and of the entire work ; the spirit of the drama discovers itself, and beauty, moral and musical, rises to its highest degree. The prayer is a marvel ; too long perhaps, but so many things were, of necessity, to be written into it.” Elisabeth must bring to it all the treasures of her being ; must offer here the supreme oblation of her love and youth, of her purity and her sorrow, of her prayers and tears. And, in this prayer of hers, we must hear the bands of earthly love unclasping ; gently and slowly, for this unbinding must be done with no rude motion, or any breath of the material or sensible. Now this immateriality is the most beautiful quality of the prayer. Nothing but chords, say

its critics ; even so,—is there aught else in well nigh all the music of Palestrina, for example ?—But the critics are at fault ; for if Elisabeth's prayer is beautiful, in the harmonies which accompany it, and signally, by certain consonances and Palestrinian successions, it is no less lovely, in its movement, sonorities, modulations, and even melody. All is uniform in construction ; the tempo only varying once or twice, and then almost imperceptibly ; and there is the same resolution of unity in the tonal colour. The rare modulations, delicately expressive, separate themselves from the preëstablished tonality, but little, and for only a moment. While nothing could be graver and at the same time sweeter than the orchestration ; only the wind instruments hold the long chords,—not once can we catch the scratch of a bow along the strings ; and all along this firm foundation of unity, the melody traces its pure almost horizontal line. The voice, like the thought, does not deviate, and whilst Tannhäuser shows nothing but contrast and human contradiction, we see in Elisabeth something of the constancy and fixity of God. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” said St. Paul. “And always,” added Bossuet to these words of the apostle, “always must we banish agitation and disquiet from this endeav-

our." Such was the mental and moral poise of Elisabeth as she laboured for a salvation dearer than her own, and, in this supreme uplifting of her soul to God,—in this melody, at once so humble and so persevering, one knows not whether most to admire her fear and trembling, or her confidence and peace.

Here we reach the summit of good, as, in the "Venusberg symphony," we were carried to the depths of the abyss of evil. Now the music becomes more and more spiritual; and whilst in that awful symphony of sin, all spoke to the body and the senses, here, on the contrary, nought but the soul is appealed to in the harmonies and melody which accompany Elisabeth, as she ascends, once more, the road to Wartburg,—there to die. Never did Wagner write anything more beautiful than this page; one of the first, in which, despairing of words, as too human and too material, he sought and found that which they refused in the orchestra;—that is to say, in music alone, pure music.

Thus, in this incomparable third act, we see Wagner, already with marked characteristics, but not, as yet, caught within the rigorous tyranny of his own genius. The instrumental melody which follows Elisabeth, is the song, or one of the songs of love which Wolfram sings in the

competition of the second act; and, coming in here again, as the adieu of Wolfram to the maiden—who passes on without a word in response,—you will feel in it, if you recognise it, the special and entirely Wagnerian interest of the “leitmotiv.” But should you not recognise it, you will still enjoy it keenly, for never could the hearer listen to it without comprehension and admiration, though he imagines, indeed, that he hears it for the first time. And so with the celebrated “Romance of the Star”; a romance, doubtless, but, by reason of poetry and music, something more. This rhythm and accompaniment were already familiar, perhaps, but not this exquisite fantasy in the recitative, nor this chromatic, wholly Wagnerian lowering of the design of the melody. If Wagner’s chromaticism is cruel at times, here, at least, it is tenderly delicate: and as for the evening star, Wolfram salutes it, not only because it is a star, that banal subject of banal poetry, but because, in its turn, this star salutes Elisabeth:

“Oh star of evening . . . greet when
She passes the peerless maid—bear her beyond this vale
of sorrow,
To fields of light which know no morrow.”

The recital of the pilgrimage to Rome, like the scene of Elisabeth’s withdrawal, is one of

the masterpieces of the purest Wagnerian art, demonstrating, in their new and true personality, the twofold genius of the master. The dramatic poet demanded this recital and produced it, rearing before the musician a seemingly impassible obstacle, which the latter crossed. These splendid lines are not in the form of a recitative, still less of an air,—rather a suite, and as it were a summing up of divers elements : its melodies, very decisive and characteristic, and, with it all, the freest declamation. The orchestra always eloquent, and now and again the voice dominating with still more eloquence ; a perfect independence, and still, evidently, a composition of ever returning periods, almost of restated themes ; some wonderfully expressive themes, and over all, surrounding with varying lights and graduating the expression, a psychology of sonorities, still more wonderful ;—this it is that renders this recital the most marvellous story of travel in all music.

It has been well said : “ Scribe would have found here the subject matter for an entire act. Wagner has preferred not to show the picture but to describe it : this is the epic recital substituted for the drama per se.”¹ In place of the

¹“ L’Oeuvre dramatique de Richard Wagner ” by A. Soubies and Ch. Matherbe.

events themselves, this is their reaction and reflection, as it were, upon the soul; an interior emotion rather than a material spectacle. Interior, too, is to be the final close of it all, for we may not see the death of Elisabeth; it is invisible and supernatural. Max the huntsman may espouse the fair Agnes, and Robert of Normandy the Sicilian Princess, but Tannhäuser can only lie down to die beside the dead Elisabeth, that their immortal spirits may rise, to live in eternal union. "Pacem summa teneut." All of the Finales of Wagner are exalted, but none are more peaceful than this. That of "Lohengrin" is less of an actual close to the drama, in that it is full of a certain spirit of indecision and of suspense; as Elsa is left alone, with a cry on her lips, forever to ring on unheard,—a call, which cannot, and alas, should not be answered. In "Lohengrin" the order of good is overthrown,—in "Tannhäuser" it is re-established. Our hearts carry away from the performance of "Lohengrin," a burdened sense of irreparable evil; whilst "Tannhäuser," on the contrary, leaves with us the glad assurance and the divine peace of evil, forever expurgated.

THE ITALIAN SOURCES
OF
THE "ORPHEUS" OF GLUCK.

THE ITALIAN SOURCES OF THE “ORPHEUS” OF GLUCK.

CHRISTOPH WILIBALD VON GLUCK was born on the confines of the Upper Palatinate and Bohemia. Three masterpieces,—and the last,—of this German-Bohemian were written in French and for France; two others, given first in Vienna, did not appear in Paris, till they had been doctored to the taste of the French palate, and all the world following out this same line of thought will tell you that the famous quarrel between the Gluckists and the Piccinists, terminated in the total destruction of Italian music; but all the world seems in this instance to be labouring under a mistake, or, at least, under an exaggerated idea of the truth. The famous quarrel had an effect much less absolute,—and its victim was one of a certain class and did not represent all of the music of Italy. When Gluck declared war,—and his public declarations expressly bear witness to this,—it was against the abuses and scandals, against the vicious and corrupt practices, but not in any wise against the healthy doctrine and revered founda-

tions of the Italian ideal. Let us attempt to discover for ourselves in what way the reform of Gluck, as illustrated in his "Orpheus," was less a revolution, perhaps, than a restoration; the uncovering to the light, of a new and more brilliant day; the promotion, to a superior and completed beauty, of the oldest and purest of Italian ideals,—that of the Renaissance;—that of such founders of the opera as Peri and Caccini and Monteverde.

Three operas, entitled "Orpheus," appeared at the beginning of the seventeenth century, that is, more than an hundred and fifty years before the "Orpheus" of Gluck: those of Peri and Caccini, at Florence in 1600, and that of Monteverde of Mantua in 1607. The last two have been published for piano and song, with the completed harmony of the basses—in a collection which cannot be too highly recommended.¹ But a little study of these works of Caccini and Monteverde shows us that within them lies the germ and power,—a power which was in its conception keenly alive and singularly efficacious,—of that beauty, which was, one day, to burst into

¹ "Publikation älterer praktischer und theoretischer Musikwerke.—Die Oper von ihren ersten Anfangen bis zur Mitte des 18ten Jahr hunderts.—1er und 2er Theil."—Breitkopf und Haertel, Leipzig.

bloom, in the perfect masterpiece of Gluck. Three words serve to define this beauty, one of which is easily understood, while the other two shall soon become light to us : this flower of Gluck's genius is antique, it is verbal, it is individual.

In the first place, antique. Only a difference of time lay between the Renaissance of music and that of the other arts ; the spirit of the one and of the other was the same. A recent and very scholarly historian of the revival of music has happily said : "The passionate admiration of the Renaissance for the plastic works of antiquity, the blind confidence in the antique rules, renewed itself, a hundred years later, in music."¹ Theory and practice were Greek, or flattered themselves that, in time, they should become so. In 1581, Vincenzo Galilei published his "Dialogue de la musique ancienne et moderne ;" while, four years later, Gabrieli set to music the Choruses of *OEdipus*, that the drama of Sophocles might be represented in the theatre of Vicenza, which had been erected by Palladio.

In 1589, Luca Marenzio published in Florence a Cantata with choruses, having for its subject

¹ "Histoire de l'opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti," by M. Romain Rolland; Paris, Thorin, 1895. We are much indebted to this excellent work. C. B.

the Pythian legend of the combat of Apollo with the serpent ; and, in truth, that cradle of Florentine opera, the salon or "Camerata" of the Bardi, appears in the light of a very academy of the Platonic philosophy. There were cultivated letters, philosophy and the sciences, and music was but the exquisite flower of this universal culture. We can easily imagine that certain lyric recitations, given at the house of the Conte di Vernio differed but little from those, which, in other days, were sung at the close of the banquets of Greece. In Florence, as in Athens, "it was the opera in miniature and at home,"¹ and when Jacopo Peri, the "Zazzerino" as they called him, because of his fair hair, sang his own "Orpheus,"—the Hellenists of the "Camerata" cried that they were listening to "Smerdiès of the abundant curling locks, in whose quest men had gone to distant Thrace itself."²

Read the "Advice to the Reader" printed in Caccini's "Nouve musiche,"—a definition of music, from an entirely Platonic point of view. "An image or true picture of the eternal, celestial harmonies; those whence fall such great good to the world, in that they elevate the intelligence of those who hear them, to the contempla-

¹ "Philosophie de l'art," by Taine.

² Id., ibid.

tion of those infinite delights, which await us in heaven."¹

And Monteverde of Venice, bears witness to the same faith, as that of the Florentine, Caccini ; with a broader genius than that of the latter, and in love, rather, with the spirit, than a slave to the letter of what had been, he still believes, no less, that to write the plaint of Ariadne,—to succeed in the imitation and the expression of the soul, there existed for him no other master than Plato ; no other light, than the radiance, far off, alas, and veiled by the deep covering of centuries, of the Platonic ideal.

Works, so conceived and achieved, could not fail to bear the sign and seal of antique beauty, as, in truth we find it upon the "Orpheus" of Caccini, and that of Monteverde, with here and there a deeper print, even, than in the work of Gluck. There comes to us through them, with a deeper meaning, the feeling of nature, the pastoral, georgic colouring ; here, Orpheus is not only the most heroic of all conjugal heroes, but the poet too, the "Vates," the primitive chorister of woods and rocks and waters,—of all those

¹ Una sembianza vera di quelle inarrestabili armonie celesti dalle quali derivano tanti beni sopra la terra, svegliandone gli intelletti uditori alla contemplazione dei diletti in Cielo somministrati.

vague and elementary powers of nature, with which he ever seems to be united. Constantly does he evoke and call upon them to testify of him, bearing always within himself something of their mystery and of their melancholy. Before the love of Eurydice was born within him, he had been only a wandering dreamer; one, said the shepherds, his companions, who had nourished himself upon sighs, and slaked his thirst in tears, “cui pur dianzi furon cibo i sospir, bevando il pianto.”

But the supreme point at which the “Orpheus” of Monteverde surpasses that of Gluck, at least from the antique point of view, is in its conclusion: to that too happy, perhaps a trifle bourgeois ending of Gluck,—to the second restitution of Eurydice, which threatens us with an eternal and rather monotonous alternating of a spouse, lost or found, we cannot but prefer the supremely exalted, entirely supernatural conclusion of Monteverde. Upon earth, at least, Eurydice shall never more be restored to Orpheus, for does not Apollo carry this word to his favourite? Seeking him that he may bear him to heaven. “But there,” cries Orpheus, “shall I never more behold the sweet rays of Eurydice, my well-beloved?—dell ‘amata Euridice i dolci rai?—” “In the sun and in the stars,” re-

plied the god, "shalt thou adore her immortal likeness."

An ideal far more admirable and far more in conformity with that of the Platonic teaching, and the beautiful theory of a love, which, ever rising, ever purifies itself.

The music of the Renaissance, inspired by a love of the antique, and desirous of its reproduction, was necessarily verbal, devoting itself exclusively to the words, and drawing out of them every last beauty which lay hidden in their meaning. These masters of music knew well that the life of Greek music lay along these lines, and before all else, was founded upon declamation and prosody. "The ancients," says Caccini, "affirmed that music consisted, first in the word, then in the rhythm, then in sound." Notice the order of the ingredients.—And to these principles Caccini held with a profound respect for their hierarchy; declamation was the very foundation of his art, and constant recitative, in which the melody scarcely announces itself. The accent is derived from the word, and nothing but the word: this music is the "*Inarmonia favelare*,"—harmonious speech, or rather: "*un canto che parla*."

With Monteverde there is a slight, a very slight change; a much greater musician than Caccini,

he gives to the choral, and especially to the instrumental part of his "Orpheus," greater importance and hitherto unheard-of proportions. His orchestra consisted of only thirty-six pieces, of which four were trombones, and yet the music of the Inferno astonishes us to-day by its variety, and the power extracted from the means at command. Here the supplication of Orpheus is not, as in Gluck's work, a series of melodic phrases, but a sort of passionate improvisation, a melopœia, in the freest style; extremely ornate, too, and florid, but with the perfume of wild and sombre flowers.

An effect of deep pathos from the violins accompanies the melody, continually intersecting and breaking it, and it is the orchestra and not the choir which responds to the apostrophes of Orpheus. So here creeps in a first suggestion of the dramatic symphony, and, still, throughout almost the entire opera, the voice,—that is the word, remains none the less sovereign. If you would know the full beauty and force of this "word" element, lightly sustained by scattered chords, read Orpheus's heartrending appeal, as Charon refuses him passage. There beats through it all, that the human language contains of music, and all that the primitive genius of that day knew to extract from it. "In principio erat

verbum." It was, indeed, the Word which reigned in the beginnings of lyric drama; the Word then was supreme.

And finally the last characteristic of these early compositions is their individuality. Their beauty proceeds from unity and not from number; indeed almost throughout the work of Caccini, and more frequently, still, in that of Monteverde, music is nothing more than monody. The principle of personality, the essential principle of the Renaissance, triumphs over the collective, which had been the law of preceding centuries, and which had, in its turn, manifested itself in the art of sound, in counterpoint and polyphony. The great invention of the creators of the opera, the base and foundation of the new music, was the song for a single voice. In studying these two operas of "*Orpheus*," we have been present at the veritable birth of the musical "*Idea*." We watch the finger of song defining its lines; almost horizontal at first, and lengthening itself out to infinite space, gradually inflexing little by little and forming figures, into which are introduced, more and more, regularity and symmetry. Strophes begin to organise, or couplets; and to ear and mind, hope is born, as they taste ever more and more, the sweet order of periods, repetitions and returns. Till finally, as the statue emerges from

its marble sheath, so, one day, out of recitative and melopoeia, there springs into life, Melody ; and in the “*Orpheus*” of Gluck, we find fulfilled — and with what magnificence — this triple promise of beauty.

No work of the master’s is more individual ; this characteristic applies to every element of which it is constituted,—is implied in the very nature of its subject. The drama called originally “*Orpheus and Eurydice*” is better named “*Orpheus*,” for the hero, alone, exists ; assembles all in one and condenses all in himself. Love,—Eurydice, is lost in her own radiance, and, indisputably the weakest page of the work, is the duet between the wedded lovers. Every musical force of “*Orpheus*” has something in it autonomous and peculiarly intrinsic ; an air, a melody, a phrase of Gluck lives in itself, acts for itself ; one can, as it were, isolate it and contemplate its individual beauty. Is there for instance, anything more unique in music, more self-sufficient, and less dependent upon that which precedes or follows, than the air : “I have lost my Euridice !” The analysis or the definition of that individual and objective ideal,—of that form of musical thought which is embodied in the air of an opera, would be quite possible, in the study of this immortal page alone. In the very

instrumentation of Gluck, the principle of individualism manifests itself and commands the situation ; well nigh every fine effect of the orchestra is that of a single instrument, as almost all lyric effect is that of a single voice. Remember the sudden baying, awful in its suddenness,—of the trombone, on the “No !” of the infernal crowds : listen at the threshold of the Elysian Fields to the murmur of the solitary flute ; and, when the melodious theme of love appears, enchanting, but yet troubled, is not the exquisite symphony which accompanies it, completely dominated by the plaint of one inconsolable oboe ?

But the “Orpheus” of Gluck is individual, too, in that the dramatic conception of Gluck, like that of old Monteverde, and quite in opposition to that of Wagner, is human and concrete. Gluck laid claim to no philosophical pretensions ; he never sought to solve the enigma of the world ; and his hero, like Monteverde’s, is such as he of whom Aristotle said : “that average, well poised man, whose heart is kin to ours.”¹ “There is a kind of music, architectural, in a way, in which all the parts hold together, respond to and rule one another ; and there is or, rather, there was, a music analogous to statuary, that art which requires a clear mind, fine feelings and a simple

¹ M. Romain Rolland, op. cit.

taste. A statue is a great piece of marble or of bronze. . . . One may pass around it, regarding it from all sides."¹ And Gluck has created the most finished masterpieces of sculptural music ; not a page, nor a phrase, of his "Orpheus," but stands so that we may pass around it, viewing it from every side ; and, as with the old Italians there is not a page, in which the beauty does not proceed from the words. Gluck, had he known of it, would, I am sure, have subscribed to Caccini's definition of music, after the antique method : the word first, then the rhythm, and, in the last place, sound. Who can deny that the force of the syllabic choruses of the "Inferno" music for example, is more dependent upon the rhythm than upon the melody itself ? And in each of the beautiful recitatives, is it not the power of the words which contributes in a greater degree, than do the airs themselves, to the continuous sublimity of the style ? In the first act : "Euridice is no more, and yet must Orpheus live"; in the third, as the fatal glance falls upon the regained wife, the single cry : "Beloved Euridice," everywhere through the work, how many phrases we find, which are only negatively musical ; the notation of which, but faintly melodic, requires—even more than the voice

¹ Taine, op. cit.

of a singer, the accent, diction and eloquence of a gifted tragedian. In this matter of declamation, every one to-day is comparing and likening Wagner to Gluck ; incontinently repeating, that the one and the other are the servants and adoring worshippers of the word, sacrificing all, even music itself, upon its altar. But let us consider ; — if Gluck and Wagner meet here and accord in theory,—in practice they separate and oppose one another to the point of contradiction. It would be impossible to find two methods more opposed in the comprehension and regulating of the rôle of the Word. Whilst in Wagner's work this agent serves only to determine the subject, situation and feeling which it is the burden of the orchestra to render, — in Gluck, the word itself, and it alone at times, is the supreme mode or agent of expression ; in it lies the centre and goal of the work, and, as it were, the seat of beauty. In short, the words are the part which could, with least detriment, be blotted from the Wagnerian lyric drama ; whilst, how so ever little one violates or alters Gluck's libretto, — as with one blow, his lyric drama is in ruins.

It would be superfluous to dwell upon the feeling and colouring of the antique, which pervades the "Orpheus" of Gluck. Of all the characteristics of the Greek genius, as

they are depicted in Taine's "Philosophie de l'art," none seem wanting in "Orpheus": the work, indeed, is the best example furnished us in the history of music, of the resurrection of this ideal. "A desire for clearness," says Taine, "the feeling for measure, hatred of the vague and abstract, disdain for the monstrous and the enormous, a taste for rounded and well defined contours." And what better or more complete definition could we give of the genius of Gluck? "The Greeks arrive at magnificence by the way of economy," and "provide for their pleasures . . . with a nicety to which our profusion never attains." Thus, too, in his magnificence and in his economy, the author of "Orpheus" is antique. By his search for and realisation of a constant beauty, which the paroxysm of passion shall not deform, by every pulse of his genius and of his soul, this Wilibald of Bohemia was a Greek,—the last of his kind.

In this brief study of "Orpheus," we had proposed ourselves the task of associating Gluck with the great Greco-Latin artists, and the masters of the Renaissance; but we cannot but feel the littleness of such an undertaking, and the aridity and narrowness of doctrinal or historical considerations, as we bow before the crowned masterpieces of art. For these ever

overflow and break beyond the bounds of any definition, which we may attempt to give of them. Individual, indeed, we must pronounce this music ; listen to the air of Orpheus entering the Elysian Fields ; in the symphony which accompanies him, we hear only the solitary voice of the oboe ; though many other voices blend, and, here, as an exception to all other parts of the work, the orchestra, marvellously expressive, coöperates with the song and with the melody. But this exquisite exception, does not contradict the general character of the composition, but rather confirms and acknowledges it. Throughout the work, Taine’s master thoughts apply with a supreme nicety. He writes again,—for one never tires of quoting him : “ the uncertain vapours which float in our atmosphere, never descend to soften the distant contours of the (Grecian) landscape ; these are not indefinite, half-misty, shadowy, but detach themselves from their bases, like the figures upon antique vases.” True of “Orpheus,” as a whole, only in the unique scene of the Elysian Fields does this analogy cease to hold good ; where, on the contrary, the contours are shaded and softened, as, along the twilight of the hills and through the pale region of the shades, the quivering symphony draws its delicious chiaroscuro.

The beauty of this opera is most concrete ; supremely formal, the genius of Gluck, represents rather than suggests, and in listening to his music, we seem to hear a searching after infinite generality, reach and symbolism. “Orpheus” is Greek,—it is Pagan, and yet may we not plead for it a little Christianity too? Recall Bossuet’s warning cry of alarm : “The enemy is always at the door, and the least relaxing, the slightest backward step, and *the most furtive glance* towards the path behind us can, in an instant, blot out of remembrance our victories and render more dangerous than ever our combats.”

Orpheus is love impersonal, and there seems no reason for the astonishment of so many that his rôle may be and has been sung by both men and women. What matters it whether the voice be feminine or masculine, which tells of this love and despair and sublime mourning? Greater here than any human or mortal passion and loosed from flesh and all distinctions of sex, love soars above the ties which bind it to the creature, up to the desire of and the regret for the sovereign and absolute good. “Dove andro senza il mio ben?” Sings Orpheus over the corpse of Eurydice. “Whither shall I go without my ‘good spirit’?” There lies the very theme and synthetic whole of the subject and of the musical master-

piece. Whether it be a dying wife or husband, the joy of the eyes or the satisfaction of the senses, a being or a belief, the soul mourns in these three immortal strophes its well-being and its supreme good ; the good which was once its own,—for which it may not be consoled, because it is not.

THE EXOTIC IN MUSIC.

To CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS.

THE EXOTIC IN MUSIC.

APROPOS OF THE FIFTH CONCERTO OF M. SAINT-SAËNS.

IN the new Concerto for piano, which M. Saint-Saëns himself interpreted at a concert, given in Paris on a great anniversary evening, we must not seek for the strength of certain other of this master's works: as for instance his Concerto in "G," or that in "C." The themes of this first movement are principally characterised by a sweet grace and amiability; and its ending is delicious in its peace and sweetness: while the Finale, on the contrary, is a masterpiece of brilliant, swift flight. I know no other, indeed, which bears one on lighter, swifter wings, vivifying and intoxicating with the joyous sensation of an eternal motion, through infinite space. Carefully symphonic, and harmoniously shared by piano and orchestra, these two movements prove the musician possessed of an infallible surety of thought and hand, of a genius natural and free in creation, and of a gift of ease and high playfulness, which fall only from the pen of a master.

But, in the second part of this Concerto, there is a certain characteristic, not to be found elsewhere, which M. Saint-Saëns brings us from his ramblings abroad;—I mean a certain exotic colouring. Let us devote a few moments to this exoticism in music,—and, more especially, in the music of M. Saint-Saëns.

Exoticism is the taste for and the representation of things at a distance and rare. And, however unusual, this genre is secondary, if not inferior,—especially in the field of music; in that it describes, or reproduces, things, rather than beings. Now beings, rather than things, humanity rather than nature is the legitimate theme of music. There are, relatively, few musical landscapes, and not one is a masterpiece of the highest order, which is not, at the same time, a masterpiece of the order of universality.

More than this, for music, exoticism presents a special danger,—the peril which may at first glance seem an advantage, of the establishment of an exotic music. Music is of all the arts the most diffused; the one most practised among primitive and savage races. There exist peoples,—as the Arabs and Mussulmen in general,—who possess neither painting nor sculpture, whose architecture is dead, but who, nevertheless, have a music of their own. In default of colour

and of form, they use sound, to express what they feel, what they imagine or see; to depict their thoughts, and passions or the sights which they contemplate. Their soul and their land which only knows to sing, pours forth its heart from lips, and darabouks, and flutes of reed. It is quite natural, too, that our musicians, desirous of writing eastern music, should borrow and transcribe from these indigenous and authentic songs, the voices of the very Orient. Whilst to the painter and the sculptor, the nature and the humanity of the far east, offer nothing but models, to the musician they furnish something more: a commencement, or a rough draught of his art; an expression and a first imitation, which may, in that it is the most direct, appear the most veracious.

But this it is not, at least in the highest sense of the word. In the first place, what verity can be found in the most carefully copied Oriental song? Merely one which is relative. Local colour exists in music, but with little light or shade, and geography has ever shown towards the art a singular tolerance; there seems no concession that she will not make to it. . . . In its favour, she swallows up seas, levels, mountains, and swells to giant proportions, the unknown and the infinite, which lie concealed in the word and

the world, Orient. She brings together and mingles, at need, diverse peoples, and between a Hindoo and an Arab melody, the most musical ear may never know to choose. Savans have been astonished to find the methods and rhythms of radiant Hellas, among the fogs of Brittany, and have wondered to discover that evil little Korrigans and Greek nymphs dance,— by what different nights,— to the music of the same songs !

This verity, only relative, is inferior, too, in that it is expressed through elementary means, by the intelligence of inferior beings. The voice of the muezzin or of the camel-driver sings only what the blue of the sky has taught the muezzin, — and the desert, the camel-driver. The voice translates, and yet is false to its trust ; from both desert and sky we would hear how much more ! “*Homo additus naturæ.*” We would that, man, who is here, who is everywhere, who by reason of his universality proves himself a great artist, should say to these ignorant, proscribed brothers of his, to the leaders of desert caravans and the invokers to prayer : “ I understand and can express you yourselves and the things which environ you ; the horizon of your souls and that of your mortal eyes. You are but copyists, — I am the interpreter ; and, above and

beyond your exactness, I alone attain to the true verity."

Something of this has been done, by the greatest musicians of exoticism; musicians, relatively modern, for our century has seen the first reflections of the sun of the East, upon music. That was a light which the old masters ignored, if they did not disdain it: sublime interpreters of the Bible or of the Gospel, they spoke only of the spirit, and outer decoration touched them but little. Not a trace of local colour do we find in the Responses of Palestrina; and Schutz's "Song of Songs" caught never a breath of perfume from the flowering vines of Carmel. The Oratorios, too, of Bach and Händel, wear scarcely a suggestion of the picturesque, still less of the exotic: even in the "Creation," however descriptive the music, Hayden has not thought to ask himself whether the terrestrial paradise lay in Austria or in Mesopotamia, and, in Eve, he saw, not the first Levantine, but the first woman.

Again in Mozart we find but little of the Orient; at all events, no landscape. In his "Seraglio" there may lie, indeed, a faint suggestion of all our modern "Orientales" and our "Captives"; in the delicate touch of dreamy languor which pervades the exquisite romance, and the uncertain tonality, announcing,—discreetly and at a far

cry,—the seductive eastern atmosphere : but, as for the charming “Turkish March,”—this patrol of the Seraglio or Carnival play is Turkish, if you will, but all for fun and laughter, all convention and almost irony ; after the manner of Molière, and worthy of the young Turk of his “Bourgeois gentilhomme.”

With Beethoven, in his “Ruins of Athens,” we seem to hear a Corsair element, added, as it were, to the “Turkish March” of Mozart ; the music is more energetic, resounding with chords, which at times are grand. The Turkish character is enlarged and elevated, and yet is Turkish, while in the beautiful chorus of dervishes, the veritable Orient bursts suddenly into sight, in all its furious violence. And Beethoven, without a local element, without an authentic document at his disposal, by the intuition of genius alone, is here as Oriental as Gluck was Greek : more Oriental than nature herself, the model, unknown but divined. Go watch those strange monks of Cairo and of Stamboul revolve in their dances ; listen to their howls, and see the wheeling flight of their robes, the convulsions of their dishevelled heads and shrieking mouths, hear their cries and the shrill symphony which accompanies them and all will strike you, not only as less beautiful, but as less true than the wild

Rondo of Beethoven, with its hoarse unison of calls and raucous cries ; its tempestuous triplets, and its atrocious appoggiaturas. Here, once again, has genius broken over the boundaries of the reality, to seize upon truth itself.

Rare with Beethoven, this exotic note found but a faint echo in the work of his contemporaries and successors. It rings, or tinkles rather, thin and only by way of amusement in some of Weber's pages : in the overtures of "Abu-Hassan" and of "Turandot," and in the march, the inevitable march of the "Guards of the Seraglio," in "Oberon" : but again it is absent from the music of Mendelssohn, and the "Paradise and the Peri" of Schumann, is Oriental only in name.

About the middle of the eighteenth century a Frenchman, Félicien David, was the first, perhaps, of his nation, to bring us some draughts of the desert air. For a time we are surprised and enchanted with his music, but Félicien David had not enough talent for his genius ; the melodious voyager was not equal to composing from elements so new and so precious, the triumph of a great musician.

Such an one, however, we find in Meyerbeer, the creator of one of the masterpieces of exotic music,—the fourth act of "L'Africaine," which

rises like a little enchanted island out of the historical operas of this master. Here again, there were no instructions in eastern lore, no documents to turn to, not a *mélody* of the country. And, now that we think of it, in what country are we? No one knows. "*L'Africaine*" might equally well be "*L'Indienne*," and the astonishing geography lesson of the second act leaves all latitude to the imagination. The verity of this music is not one to be overthrown, by three degrees difference on the map, or one, which a meridian may decide; it is vast, and true to at least one entire side of the earth,—that on which the sun's rays fall warm and full; a verity, largely picturesque and descriptive. "*Pays merveilleux*," sings Vasco, "*jardins fortunés, salut.*" Is it Africa or India to which he bends the knee? I, for one, cannot decide. But, in any case, it is the music of a nature, unknown to us and splendid, of a sky the warm light of which quivers through the tremolo of the subtle violins; of a land, whence we can hear the virgin life-blood beating in the heavy pulsation of the drums.—A verity, widely human and moral, for the soul of the hero unites and mingles itself with nature; that soul of the conqueror, conquered in his conquest. One is reminded of the "*Mariage de Loti*," raised as it were to higher plains: this, too,

is a marriage, but colossal and cosmic rather than human ; a reciprocal gift of creature and creation. —A verity, finally, that one might almost call colonial, for this music breathes the pride, and love of a land added to, enriched and glorified by one of her children.

And now collect all the melodies of the Orient, and assemble her musicians ; replace Meyerbeer's orchestra by one of Algeria, India or Japan ; instead of Vasco's air, offer a real "Bamboula ;" confine yourself to transcribing and photographing, and choose between the conforming copy and the resemblance, between exactitude and truth.

This exactitude of ours is becoming more and more painstaking ; such savans and artists as Gevært, Bourgault-Dacoudray and Tiersot have begun to fix the history, — and the geography of music. They have gazed more closely into time and space, diving back into the centuries and scaling the horizons ; till the senses of surer archæology and of a more precise exoticism are awakened ; and modes and rhythms, antique, or attuned to alien and far distant ears are better known and practised. No one has ventured into these fields with more science and happy taste than M. Bourgault-Ducoudray. The author of "Thamara" and the "Rapsodie cambodgienne" bears the same relation to the music

of to-day, as does the Colonial Minister or rather the Director of the Jardin d' acclimatation to his government. "Thamara" is, perhaps, the purest product in modern art of the attempt to represent the Orient by Oriental music and a not too summary ethnography. This work, especially in its second act, is truly original in its constant appropriation of all the elements, rhythms, modes, melodic decoration, antique and Oriental melody to the most subtle and complex modern polyphony. And from this union music has drawn more than picturesque and decorative effects ; in a certain love-duet, and in the "Lamento," it strikes chords, new indeed to our ears, welling up from hearts alien to ours but writhing under the stroke of like passions with our own. We may not term this idle inquiry and condemn it as of wholly indifferent interest. In this particular path, M. Saint-Saëns has gone, perhaps, not quite so far : that is, no less curious, and admiring no less the exotic element, he has, nevertheless, satisfied himself with it more quickly, in order that he may the sooner dominate it, for his own purposes. His classic spirit came very tardily to an appreciation of exoticism ; the "Princesse jaune," though a "princess of far-off climes," is still neither purely nor profoundly Oriental : and the beauty of "Samson" is Biblical rather

than Oriental. M. Saint-Saëns seems to have entered upon what we may call his travelling period or travelling style in the "Mélodies persanes," in the "Suite algérienne," and more recently still in the "Valse canariote" and "Africa." The second part of his latest Concerto is the finest; there is no question here of child's play, or precious articles of *vertu*, or of, more or less, odd melodies, transcribed with, more or less, fidelity. These themes are strange, alien, but, I believe, thoroughly authentic; capable, too, of the finest colour and savour under good orchestration. However, their highest beauty and truth lie not so much in these elements, as in the transformation and transfiguration which operate through them; in the fusion of those sonorous elements,—nature and instinct, which are the exception, with music, which is conscience and rule,—art, in fine.

This remarkable work, a Rhapsody rather than a Symphony, is composed of three parts: first an Eastern melopoeia shapes itself, on a string accompaniment of unequal rhythm and rude sonorities, crossed with rapid scales of a bizarre fashion, and cut short, in fantastic pauses. Then suddenly, a song is heard, infinitely sweet; equable as the other melody was capricious;—a song of the Nile boatmen, eloquent of the tranquil flow and august peace of the river, while here

and there a stronger accent marks the cadence of the oars, and the deep breathing of the rowers. Here lies the element, indigenous to the East and conveying a certain authentic verification to the work; but soon,— and we can mark exactly the measure,— the greater artist intervenes, opening to the theme, a new path, and a wider horizon; and the fresh element draws consequences and exquisite deductions from its larger view, growing and expanding into pure music, as the humble Egyptian folksong enters into the order and, as it were, into the divine circle, of a universal beauty.

To the African motive,— and we must remember that unity of location is not rigorous in this class of music,— there succeeds a motive of Cochin-China, quite different from the first; dreamy no longer but gay, tripping, and picked out with crystalline notes. On one of these, as though with heart seized with a longing for his country and his art, the musician pauses abruptly; then in some wonderfully full chords gathers himself together, and plunges once again with glad power, into the realm of true and pure music. How well M. Jules Lemaître understood all the delicious melancholy which lies in exoticism! As we let our imaginations dwell upon new and strange aspects of the uni-

verse, there creeps upon us, entering thus deeply into the realms of vision, an uneasiness and vague anguish ; a homesick longing for the familiar dreams which custom has made real and reassuring. It is this anguish of homesickness which makes the almost tragic beauty of the last part of the composition : the melopœia of the beginning returns ; its broken fragments, reunite ; the accompaniment, ever breathless and hoarse, while above this, a free recitative, moves along ; slowly now, and, again, springing forward. The piano sings, declaims, throwing across the wild obstinacy of the orchestra a sort of desperate "vocero." Always the Orient, and still something more than a peculiar and distant landscape : this is you and me, our very selves,—all men. This is sorrow, fear,—in a word the soul of humanity and as such, every child of man recognises it. To find in music anything which recalls this beautiful Finale, we must go to the Adagio of Beethoven's "Trio in D :" the lovely bit, of which some one said : "Beethoven—and the gay streets of Cairo." And this seems exactly to characterise the exoticism of M. Saint-Saëns, and the part which local truth and beauty play in his work, as contrasted with his true sense of beauty in its general function, and of the universality of truth. A boatman's song, imported from Egypt and

faithfully reproduced may be picturesque music ; but there is only one musician capable of arousing a memory — almost of creating a likeness of Beethoven's self from that melody of a Nile fisherman.

January, 1897.

SILHOUETTES OF MUSICIANS.

“TIBI DILECTISSIMÆ.”

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I.

AMBROISE THOMAS.

FOR a long two hours, the audience at the “Concert de l’Opera” in Paris had waited hopelessly for something to admire, and, anxiously, for something which they might comprehend. When, on their weary ears, rose accents, very simple and sober, but honest and profound: on the threshold of the “Inferno,” Dante saluted Virgil, in a few exquisite measures, and then, with a pure loveliness, still, and sadness, the lovers of Rimini told their sweet despair. Loud was the applause which followed, and the author of “Mignon” and “Hamlet,” and of “Françoise de Rimini” received an ovation,—his last, alas! In these noble recitatives, this beautiful declamation, after the French style, and this art of drawing from the words,—from the very letters— all that they contain of music, one feels vaguely that there lies a

something great and precious, which to-day is only too surely menaced, with destruction. An heritage of France, which is falling slowly away from her,—her traditions and her genius. No one in that audience suspected that, in so few days, the old master himself would have passed away.

He was the senior of the French and, I believe, of all living masters : he it was, who, for the greatest number of years, had inhabited that kingdom “where dwell,” says Hoffmann, “the heavenly enchantments of sound.” The younger generation, finding him always grave, forgot that the musician of “Hamlet” had once written “Caïd”: he, himself, indeed, was not displeased that the latter work should be forgotten, and still, let us look at it for a moment, to-day. “Caïd” is not only a fine parody on a certain type of Italian art ; its outward guise may be this, but at heart its music is very French,—in a sense, national. Not, I beg of you, as the “Marseillaise” is national. But in little by-ways, hidden, but how pleasant ! In its facility, and familiar, unaffected irony ; in the piquant opposition between Oriental decorum and the Paris of the gamins,—between the alternate couplets of the eunuch and the drum-major. And then, as sang the “Grand-Duchesse” :



AMBROISE THOMAS.

“ J'aime les militaires, j'aime ! ” I love “ Caïd ” for its merry, good-hearted, military element, for its suggestion of Algeria, and its gaiety, conquering and colonial at once. All this is supremely French. Let batteries and squadrons escort the Director of the Conservatoire, and the grand Dignitary of the Légion d'honneur, but behind the musician of “ Caïd,” send the lively little common soldiers, the real troops of France.

In default of national obsequies, the French people may well mourn the musician of “ Mignon.” The only opera, I believe,—I speak of works worthy of the name—which has been given as often as a thousand times upon the same stage, during the lifetime of the author. A thousand times in the space of thirty years,—years rich and glorious, but often ungrateful and cruel. And yet they spared “ Mignon.” “ Consult the ignorant as well as the learned,” said the Wisdom of Egypt, “ and grow not so proud of thy science.” Let us consult then the ignorant, or those whom, too disdainfully, perhaps, we call such. Let us inquire of the humble, naïve souls and constant hearts, which remained ever faithful to the work which, for thirty years, appealed to their desire for the Ideal. Not an ideal of the sublimest perhaps, and yet an ideal possible to them. We should not allow ourselves to grow

too indignant over the liberties taken with Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister"; there are Germans, not a few, who have pardoned them. Hanslick, among others, insisted that in a work of so purely French a spirit and sentiment, as that of "Mignon," the heroine could not die; and he was right. Is there among all those melodies one which suggests, or even permits so tragic an end as death? Those melodies, so well made to fly long and far through the sky of France,—clearer than that of Germany, cooler than that of Italy. "Mignon" may, perchance, live forever; the last example of the French opéra-comique, the legacy of a kindly style, and a happy art.

"Hamlet" is less popular, but more beautiful: all that is lovely in the prologue to "Françoise de Rimini," a sustained dignity of style, and an eloquence of recitative, are not only found here from one cover to the other of the noble score, but more than once there flashes across it the flame of divine fire. The musician has won the daring wager which the Shakespearean drama throws down to him. Without pausing at the truly fine scene of the "Esplanade," let us seek the pages of least importance, the transition passages which bind together the greater parts. Here we find in abundance, touches of profound

truth, and of solemn beauty. "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt. . . . In these lines more than in others more important, has the master known this yearning himself and awakened it in his hearers; longing breathes and sighs about his Hamlet, whose brow seems the sombre throne of melancholy. Bitter melancholy in the act of the "Oratoire," rising to an overwhelming fury; plaintive melancholy, appeased only by death, in the mad-scene. But we are attempting no technical analysis, or musical criticism: something better may be said of this exquisite scene,—or, resaid, rather, for it has been already told: "There is a sublime romance in the fourth act of 'Hamlet.' . . . These few bars of desperate, homesick melancholy pass and repass ceaselessly through Ophelia's sad plaint, whilst around her, her companions come and go, dancing and singing; and here lies the contrast, ever of poignant interest to the heart, of Life, disporting itself in careless gaiety about a Soul, prey to the lonely passion and painful martyrdom of a hidden wound. . . . Leave her, all you to whom she has distributed the flowers in her arms, with all the sweet grace of her wounded love; leave her, to wander on to that water's edge . . . to drown there, with the remembrance of her lost joy, her incurable love. 'Adieu,' she sighs, still,

'adieu, mon seul ami.' 'Life may laugh on now, and dance,—spring may pour forth prodigal showers of light and perfume, the sick Soul is freed forever.'

So wrote Paul Bourget of this exquisite music ; the sense, symbol, and soul of which could not be more beautifully expressed. I would gladly close with this poetic commentary, were it not for a personal last word with which I would express a regret and an excuse, as well as an adieu.

Some years ago, a thoughtless word escaped me with reference to the last work of Ambroise Thomas, which saddened, I knew, the gentle old man. The kindly heart, which from my infancy had ever been full of gentleness for me was hurt, and yet that heart kept its indulgent kindness for me to the end. And thus it was, that as I kissed his forehead, the other day, and for the last time,—that forehead which had never frowned upon me, I whispered to him what I would repeat here : "Master, forgive me ! Youth is inconsiderate and its words come quickly : but, now that you know all things, you know well that I loved you."

February, 1896.

II.

. . . , THE ATHENIAN.

We know only his country, his name escapes us. For a little, men thought him to have been Cleochares, son of Bion, but it seems that they were mistaken, and the Poet-musician of the "Hymn to Apollo," which was discovered two years ago graven upon the marble tablets of the Athenian treasure at Delphi, is become once more anonymous. The most considerable relic yet discovered to us, of antique music, this hymn is also the most ancient, dating from the third century before our era :—to-day, the oldest song ever born of human lips.

We know no longer how to listen to it, as, two thousand years ago, Greece listened, assembled for the feast of her god. This music fills us with wonder, it resembles so little the melodies which we have been accustomed to call antique, and to respond to and admire as such, because in them the Greek soul has seemed to have been born again in its beauty for us. Never thus, or in analogous fashion, did the Gluck of "Orpheus" and "Alceste," the Berlioz of "Les Troyens," or the Gounod of "Ulysse" and "Sapho" write. This is scarcely a song,—a melody ; but

rather a melopœia or a cantilene, like some modulated call of a shepherd, or the "canzone" of a gondolier, floating across the lagoon : and it not only disconcerts our habits of æsthetic thought, our dreams and illusions, but it seems to contradict the very ideal of Greece herself ; such music renders no such precise, formal testimony to that ideal, as the arts of architecture and of statuary have always borne.

But, in reality, this song seems vague and uncertain to us, only in default of an ear keen enough to hear and of a mind, acute to understand. We have lost more than one divine secret, and are not initiated says Renan, as was the Athenian, upon whom the Goddess of wisdom smiled at his birth. Gross and dull of hearing we do not understand that perfect simplicity, as well as extreme complication, has its mysteries, grown impenetrable to us. But how well this Delphic hymn understands, and how clearly it voices the genius of Hellas ! How it attests the essential Greek qualities : fineness of tact, delicacy of perception, an aptitude in seizing upon suggestions, unheard by us ! A melodic line, sustained lightly, upon a few chords of the cithara and enriched by a contra song on the flute,—this is the whole of the "Hymn to Apollo," and it is doubtful whether Greek music was ever any less simple.

A very little thing, and yet this little must be exquisite, and in the light and transparent Attic air, the most sombre motive, picturesque or sonorous, produced an impression of beauty. A stranger to orchestration, almost to harmony, this music knew only melody and rhythm ; but with melody and rhythm she wrought wonderously. By the refinements of the one and the other, by the succession—which she varied in an infinite number of ways,—of notes long and short, high and low, she traced in space, contours so pure,—she divided the time into periods so free and cadenced, that, beside her art, our own seems material and brutal, and so subtle a division of time and space escapes our modern ears.

And more, it irritates and wounds us ; the melody of the “ Hymn to Apollo ” proceeds incessantly in semi-tones, and this chromaticism is cruel to our ears ; beginning with offending us, it leaves us exasperated. And why, if not because our hearing is become blunt and hard, lost to the sense and taste for those sonorous gradations, those infinitesimal divisions, concerning which the ear of the Greek was so lovingly curious ? Not only the semi-tone, but the quarter-tone was sweet to them ; and inimical to everything stiff and rigid, they knew how to inflect the very profile of their melodies and of their temples.

Musicians they were, as well as philosophers, and we may say with Renan, that their sounds, as their ideas, “transformed themselves, the one into the other, through changes as indiscernible as the translucent shadings upon a dove’s neck.”

Then, too, their music, and above all that which is most theirs, that which their sages praised and of which the Delphic hymn is a remnant,—the Doric, pacified the soul and calmed it into order; while too often, our harmonies only disquiet and trouble. This, at least, we are capable of comprehending and of responding to: “Oh Muses of the deep forests of Helicon! Daughters of resounding Zeus, Virgins of the glorious arms! Come and, by your accents, charm Phœbus, the god,—your brother of the golden locks!” Read, sing for yourself this reproduction of the ancient melopœia, and you will find it impossible not to be touched with its serenity, peace and noble melancholy. And this melancholy, breathing from the song; the melancholy which dwelt, they say, on the features of the divine archer, even after victory, grows for us, with the sadness of the centuries and of a long-passed age. This, then, is what remains with us of the most honoured and loved art, of the most artistic people of God’s creation! A fragile cantilene, a murmur, a sigh, which we scarcely possess

the knowledge to understand. What would we not give to hear it sung over yonder ; a ruin among the ruins,—Doric too, of the sacred hill of beauty ! Two thousand years from that old time, as we in our turn pass down the waters of melody, its stream seems ever to be enlarging ; innumerable affluents have swelled it ; some have troubled its currents and, to-day, we can no longer distinguish the shores. We have passed the quiet mouth of its harbour, and sail now upon the open, intoxicated with sound and the infinity of great waves. And while the ocean rages and threatens to engulf all, I dream, now and again, of that unknown Greek, who sat by the far-off, newly-born spring, as pearly drop by drop, fell from the hollow of the rock.

1896.

III.

BACH.

It is as we grow old that we comprehend and admire and love him : the eyes of youth are powerless to measure him, for he is not the musician of the springtime of life. His own country waited for a century and a half, before she troubled herself to listen to his message, and

never, perhaps, will he be known in his fulness. Everything in and around him is colossal ; it needed generations to prepare the world for him, and generations will be necessary to his fruition ; he is the centre, not of a family, nor of a tribe but of a nation. His most remote ancestor in a direct line, was Veit or Valentine Bach, a miller and baker of Wechmar, who, persecuted for his Lutheran faith, took refuge in Presbourg. Whence, however, persecution drove him once again to his native country and to his mill ; where in his later days, he would sit and listen to its old wheel, accompanying its slow turnings, with his zither. In the course of some years, Saxony,—all Thuringia was peopled with his descendants, direct and collateral, till there was not a town but boasted of a Bach, as its musician of court or church ; and when the genealogical tree had reached its hundred years' growth, the harmonious branches spread over the entire country. Every year, a family festival of music and of piety gathered about the table, many artists of the name of Bach ; they came from everywhere, —from Erfurt, Arnstadt, and from Eisenach ; from the mountains and from the plain. At one of these festivals, one hundred and twenty are said to have met.

John Sebastian was the eighth child of a father



BACH,

who had twice married ; while he, himself, had two wives, and twenty children,—eleven boys and nine girls. Everything about Bach seems prodigious both as an effect and as a cause ; all those of his own family lead up to and proceed from him ; he was the sum total of those of whom he was born, and who were born of him. We find in him the realised characteristics of ancestors, traced back, if we will, to the miller-baker of Thuringia : for he moulded and kneaded music, and left it, substantial, nourishing and consecrated as bread. Bach is the musician of pure reason. By a genius so constantly human and moral as that of Beethoven, the order of Beauty was kept within the confines of the order of Good, while with Bach, more scientific and abstract, it borders upon the realm of Truth. Beethoven represents the effort and the triumph of the will,—the trembling, heroic submission to the law ;—Bach is that law itself. Every masterpiece of his is a system ; a grand concert of laws, eternally active. He created the Fugue, beautiful as an operation of the mind ; the Fugue,—which, if not musical thought, itself, is, at least, the greatest method of expressing that thought. All that there is of deduction and of logic in music, sprang from the brain of Bach ; and while Palestrina, for example, combined single notes and

periods, only after a fashion, Bach interweaves,—and in what a prodigious network,—lines of melody, so extended, so imposing and of such complex figures, that the mind wearies in its efforts to follow, comprehend and make them its own.

There is astronomy, too, or cosmography in the music of Bach. Upon a fixed axis of the basses, the choruses of the “B-minor Mass” and of the “St. Matthew Passion” music describe their gigantic orbits. In contracted lines of conjunction, the parts of a Fugue, converge and separate; such modulation and sensitiveness of theme or subject, warning us infallibly, like the quivering of a star, that another theme disturbs it, advancing and about to reveal itself. Physics, likewise, and Mechanics,—we may appeal to Gounod’s authority for the assertion—have their part in the music of Bach; in the coexistence of movements, in a law of indefinite propagation, and in the interference of waves and currents, which “meet and cross without ever destroying, or so much as interrupting one another.”

And, finally, if, as Leibnitz avers, geometry exists in all things, in what music should we be so likely to discover its presence? The “B-minor Mass,” the “St. Matthew Passion” music stand like the pyramids of Egypt, while the four winds

of man's mind break upon them, as the winds of Heaven break upon their sisters of the desert.

But in the very centre of the pyramid you will find the royal chamber, where, beneath the enormous weight of stone, there beats eternally, a great heart. The sensibility of Bach,—when he allows himself to feel—is, like his reason, colossal: scarcely anything less than the thought of God moves this genius so supremely religious, into transports of joy or of sorrow. A joy and a sorrow which are profoundly individual and subjective, as in the airs of the “Mass in B-minor,” in innumerable Cantatas, and in the airs and accompanied recitatives of the “Passion” music; a joy and sorrow, universal and akin to all humanity, in those sad or triumphal polyphonies which seem to convene the ages to sombre or glorious, but always divine, spectacles. Bach never touches us more nearly, than when he brings together sensibility personal and sensibility collective;—his own soul and ours, in those unparalleled dialogues between a single voice and an innumerable throng of voices;—between a sublime leader and still more sublime choruses,—between the multitude who pray and weep, and a mediator, the mystery of whose mercy who shall fathom?

How close to the heart it comes when, to the

plaints and sighs of some pathetic melody, he fixes a simple, grave choral ! We are divided against ourselves ; the sensibility which suffers, is opposed to the will which accepts suffering. Beethoven, alone, since the days of Bach, has felt the anguish and renewed the tragic beauty of this struggle and of this submission.

And still with the last look, as the first, we must feel that Bach appeals most strongly to the understanding ; here it is, that he gives us pause, to wonder with dazzled eyes ; and here it is, that he acquires the power to console us. " You must find a reason," says popular wisdom to unhappy men, and a great truth lies in the lightly uttered dictum. Let them come to Bach, these sorrow-stricken ones, and the austere master will give them, or will restore to them a reason. Above the suffering, born of a sin against the law and that is of a disorder which may pass, he will raise them to the contemplation of and the hope in a law restored and of an order reëstablished, — never to pass.

IV.

SCHUBERT.

He was poor and ugly, this son of an humble Viennese schoolmaster, with frizzled hair, a dark



SCHUBERT.

skin and fiery eyes. When, at eleven years of age, he presented himself for admission at the Conservatory of the imperial chapel, they mocked the little "Moor," and his patched blouse, but, a little later, it was his masters themselves who cried: "He has learned all from the good God!"

At sixteen he returned to the home of his father and brothers, who were all excellent musicians; at eighteen he wrote "Die Betende" and "Die Sterne," and at nineteen, "Der Erlkönig," after having read Goethe's ballad three times. His career was brief, and his work considerable; ten Sonatas and numerous pieces for the piano; Trios, Quartettes and Quintettes; eight Symphonies, too little known; sixteen Operas, quite unknown, and "Leider" by the hundreds. He lived a life which was mediocre and colourless, for there was no brilliant side to his misery. Work—or incessant creation rather—for he possessed the divine gift of abundance and of facility; a ceaseless soliciting of modest employments, never obtained; a few summer weeks of tramping in the Austrian Alps with Vogl, the great singer, and the friend who made the first fortune of the "Leider" in Germany,—such was Schubert's life. His only happy days were those of free wandering, when, like two trouba-

dours, Vogl and he traversed mountains and valleys, singing the most beautiful of all human songs, surrounded by the most beautiful things of God.

Things which he loved, it would seem, more than he did God himself. For it was thus that he wrote to a friend, who had expressed a fear of death: "If he could see, as I do, these lovely lakes, these grand forests, at the very aspect of which we are confounded in admiration, he would not prize our little human life so greatly; he would consider it a great happiness to be confided anew to that earth, which is ever pushed on to an eternally new life, by a power of which we cannot conceive." And yet when death came to him,—with hasty footsteps, for he was but thirty-one, he did not smile. "Bring your ear close to my lips," he said to one of his brothers; and, very low, with a voice of doubt, almost of fear, he whispered: "Now tell me,—what is going to happen to me?" One November day a very little time after having completed that cycle of songs, which he called the "Winter reise," he died, and they laid him beside Beethoven, whom he admired above all masters. The concerts, given as a memorial to him, scarcely paid the expenses of his burial.

Like Weber and Schumann, Schubert was

entirely German, even more so perhaps, than was Beethoven; nothing is less like one of his "Lieds" than a French "Romance" or an Italian air, and yet above everything else and under all circumstances, he was a melodist. Among his song-accompaniments we find some destined to be immortal;—those for instance of "Gretchen am Spinnrade" and "Der Erlkönig," but it is above all by his gift of melodic invention, in his power of creating the simple body and living tissue of song that he is a great master,—one of the greatest. It was always and ever melodies that burst forth from him without let or hindrance, till with his two hands he would clasp his forehead as though to defend it against their rapid flight or their driving assaults.

But these were German melodies; less classic than those of Italy, graver than those of France: so simple that a child might remember them with no effort; so beautiful, that the ears of that child would but half hear them. Other melodies find their resting-place in our heads,—these nestle down in our hearts; one knows them in very truth by heart, and by the depths of the heart. They are seldom joyous; I know not a page of Schubert that is comic, and still less one in which he plays the buffoon. His muse never laughs, but she smiles freely, ingenuously, candidly,—

the true German muse, which Heinrich Heine calls somewhere, “that good girl.”

Schubert is less personal,—I had almost said, less of an egoist, than Schumann : the vast world finds a voice in his innumerable “Leider”; they are a whole and rounded representation of the life universal,—that of men and of things. He is a great landscape painter : his skies are finely beautiful, for remember “Die Sterne.” And a musician of the waters, for listen to “Die, Forelle” and how many another transparently exquisite song of the mill or the river ; listen, above all, to the accompaniment, plunging down in foam, sparkling in waterdrops, of “Auf Wasser zu singen.”

And, finally, Schubert is the creator of “Genre” music ; to-day, still, the master from whom the others draw their inspiration, and whom none surpass. Well did Schumann say : “As many as are the varying forms which clothe the thoughts and actions of men, so many and so varied are the forms expressed in the music of Schubert.” Picturesque or domestic, sedentary or nomadic ; melody of the fireside or of the highway ; of fisher, miller or postilion, of hurdy-gurdy player or spinning-girl, it is the music of that innumerable and anonymous throng called humanity ; the harmonious voice of the thousand

trivial incidents and daily habits which are life. And what a full real life! Natural and true in quite another sense than that in which the music of the theatre offers us a more intense but less faithful representation. There is perhaps less truth, at least a truth which is less familiar and less near, as it were, in "Don Juan," "Les Huguenots," "Faust" or "Parsifal" than lies in the "Adieu" or "Des Mädchens Klage"; and the "Course à l'Abîme," or the "Ride of the Valkyries" have nothing in them as human, as has this other ride of an obscure voyager and unfamed knight, who flies, clasping his child in his arms.

By this love of his for the home life, the middle life, as it were, and by what Fromentin calls "la cordialité pour le réel"; by the nature, too, of his preferred subjects, and finally by the dimensions of his masterpieces, Schubert resembles those supreme Genre painters, the Dutch; those whom we call, "les petits maîtres," and who, in truth are very great; yet the musician rises higher than they, in poetry and romance, in his warm sensibility and emotion, and a constant escape and flight towards the above and the beyond. "Der Erlkönig" is, indeed, a flight of father and child into the night, and before the spectre of fear, but something more than this is in it,—a

something of which Liszt, if I mistake not, was the first to catch a glimpse ; the inner and more tragic conflict, between the reality, powerless to defend and to save us, and the ideal in mad pursuit of us ; that ideal which brings us suffering and sometimes death. This fine realisation of the truth of life it was, which made Schubert, at once, a great master of the real, and a great master of dream, fantasy and mystery.

V.

SAINT CECILIA.

Patrician maiden of old Rome, wife, but virgin and,—martyr at the last, we salute you. Clad in your cyclas, embroidered with circling bands of gold, your hair knotted high on your lovely head, arms raised towards heaven, thus we see you on the medals, which mothers and godmothers were wont to fasten about the necks of their little children, that these, too, might, one day, love music.

At this end of the centuries, we salute you as you were found ; lying languidly, the delicate neck wounded with the sword-thrust, the face turned towards the ground and the arms, sinking down the one against the other ;—so you sleep,

in your sanctuary by the Tiber, transfixed by the sculptor, in marble, less pure than yourself.

And, again, we salute you, in that most beautiful and most significant of all your representations,—that canvas, in which the young painter of Urbino, has sent the unworthy instruments of earthly symphonies falling to the ground, from your hands, as they open in an ecstasy of celestial song. Mary Magdalene and three others surround you, listening, ravished, like yourself; Paul, who commanded the faithful to sing to the Lord in their hearts: “*Cantantes et psallentes in cordibus vestris Domino.*” (Eph.)—Augustine, who in the restless days of his youth, wept whenever there fell on his ears the Ambrosian chants of the church; and John, who saw and heard the sublime sights and anthems of the Eternal Jerusalem. In a first sketch of the picture, the angels above you were not singing; were playing, instead, upon those same instruments which now fall from your hands;—in this final canvas they sing only, as though nothing material, nothing which can be seen or touched should serve for high and celestial music, such as yours, the exalted patron saint.

It is nowhere written that you loved this, our earthly music, nor, indeed, that you were a musician, oh patroness of musicians throughout all

ages! We only read that, at the moment, in which you submitted to that marriage, of which your faith and purity stood in such alarm, whilst music rose from the festal instruments, you sang to God, only in your heart, saying : “Cantantibus organis, Cæcilia virgo in corde suo soli Domino decantabat, dicens : Fiat, Domine, cor meum et corpus meum immaculatum, ut non confundar.”

On this sole testimony is your legend founded ; it was the art of painting, they say, which, during the fifteenth century caused you to be crowned as the patroness of music, in Flanders first—later in Italy. And from that time, every melodious creature of God, everything which sings has been dedicated to you. An hundred and fifty years after the death of the greatest of your painters, a traveller was following, one Sunday evening, the road to Rome,—your Rome. As he entered a church which bore your name, a priest stood alone reciting Vespers, whilst the soft chirping of birds accompanied him from the loft of the high organ. Bystanders replied to the pilgrim's questionings, that the birds were fed and cared for there as in an aviary, where night and day they might sing, and that, as the parish was so poor, you were well satisfied with the services of these little musicians.

Well did they serve you ; and the homage of the

birds was not amiss. In spite of criticism and of history, may you keep the title bestowed upon you by tradition and art. Is there no assurance that you were familiar with music? So be it;—neither does aught prove that you were ignorant of it. Doubtless you sang the Psalms of praise in the catacombs, and nothing beautiful in ancient art could have been strange to a daughter of patrician Rome. But if you played upon no instrument, and if you never sang, what then? You possessed the secret and the love of those sublime chords of music, as a poet said: "Those sounds which the earth knows not." In you, one of the best and oldest names of Rome was allied with the newer but already more beautiful name of Christian. And when that nuptial shadow, which, by your prayer, was guarded virginal and pure, descended upon you and the youthful pagan who loved you; then, in that night of mystery and of miracle, from which your husband arose, a Christian, what divine unheard harmonies must have swelled up from your souls, both alike, ready to suffer martyrdom for the same love of the same God. The very text of your story, as I repeat it to myself, proves to me that your gentle, traditional patronage is justified. "She sang in her heart." Is not that song worthiest of the name of Song, most profound, most beautiful, which

is sung in the heart? You are witness, sweet saint, to this great truth ; and if ever music should dare to deny you, whom then would she prefer to you ? The choice would embarrass your very enemies, for one of them, proposing a certain saint Arnold de Juliers, a contemporary of Charlemagne, confesses that, "the simple profession of a player upon the violin, which the latter exercised, is not proportionate to all that music includes within itself."

Let our memory never mislay this confession ; it renders you full justice, crowns you once again and consecrates you. Music is not all in sound ; may your example ever remind us of the truth. On that day when closing your ears to the profane Epithalamium, you sang in your heart, then, oh most harmonious of saints, then did your silent voice sing that true, eternal and most perfect music of which the other is but the sign or the echo ; the music of the soul, in accord with itself, in accord with its principle and the purpose of its being.

Thus shall you ever remain the saintly musician, and the saint of musicians.

VI.

CHOPIN.

When George Sand was recounting the story of her life,—an old woman, telling over the names of those whom she had loved, she said, after speaking of a certain Everard : “ There was another soul, no less beautiful and no less pure in its essence,—no less sick and troubled in this world ; one whom I meet with placid calm in my conversations with the dead, and whom I wait to see again, face to face in that better world, where we shall all recognise one another beneath the rays of a light brighter and more divine than that of the earth. I speak of Frederic Chopin. . . .”

In truth, in the light of this world, George Sand and Chopin, like George Sand and De Musset, could not but misunderstand one another : they were made not for, but against one another. Between this woman and the man whom she loved, if we speak either of the great poet or the great musician, there was contradiction and incompatibility, and, in the twofold meeting of love and suffering, each man, as says Paul Bourget, “ committed no other wrong than to be himself.” It was George Sand herself, who said of De Musset : “ He was one of those beings who, with the

highest sublimities of thought, and the purest promptings of the heart, cannot arrive at the apogee of their faculties, without falling into a sort of intellectual epilepsy." And, again,—of Chopin: "His spirit had been flayed alive ; the wrinkle of a rose leaf, the shadow of a fly caused it to bleed." Now there were two sorts of spirit to which that of the tranquil, genial Berrichonne could not for long accommodate itself,—the epileptic and the flayed-alive.

This diseased sensibility, or this "passionate excitability" as an English critic has called it, was the whole of Chopin's misfortune,—well-nigh the whole of his genius. Because everything wounded him, he seemed to desire to quench life in everything ; and the very name of certain of his works, Ballades or Nocturnes, breathes a new languor, an impression of vague poetry and of moonlight, not to be found in those older and severer titles of Suites, Sonatas or Variations.

The melody of Chopin, often of great beauty, has never a suspicion of the angular or square ; soft and rounded, in free contours, it undulates, bends and bows. Almost at its birth, as though finding even then, the design too precise, or the brilliancy too intense, he attenuates it and dulls its edge, scattering about it none of those "gru-



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pettos" or trills, thin, stiff decorations of a bygone age, but flowered and rich draperies, gauzes and veils, and all the sumptuous and supple attire of a new, but enervated style.

He hated any dryness or hardness of timbre, as of melody; and that the note might vibrate without wounding or tearing, he enveloped it by using the pedals as none had ever before used them, with that atmosphere and chiaroscuro, in which some of his beautiful songs seem to float and bathe themselves.

And, finally, there is not a rhythm, even the most characteristic one of the Waltz or Mazurka, which Chopin has not loosened and relaxed: "tempo rubato" is his preferred movement. And what does this mean if not that he deceives time, or rather steals it? He loved to hide, from his own eyes, the flight and perpetual lapsing of our stay, which the classic geniuses of another temper, feared not to mark, with great strokes, regular and strong.

Classic, and for just these reasons, Chopin can never be, but he is deeply original. He owes nothing to Italy,—no art being less fixed, plastic and formal than his own; and neither France nor Germany may claim him. He has no French trills and quavers, his is no Italian song, and still less does he think with the German; by the very

fundamental form of his thought, Chopin differs from the Germans, even from those, who original though they be, still bear to one another some resemblance,—an air of family, and, as it were, of country. Bach and Schumann, Bach and Wagner are less dissimilar than are Chopin and the author of the “Well-tempered Clavichord,” the author of “Manfred,” or of the “Valkyrie.” Every German possesses, in a greater or less degree, the genius of polyphony and of the Symphony; a gift to combine and develop; and such a genius was absolutely lacking in Frederic Chopin.

It was the heart of his race which beat in his breast; no musician was ever more patriotic and national;—he was more Polish than the others are French or Italian or German. He was of Poland,—Poland only, and his music broods over the world, like the immortal soul of his murdered fatherland. A melancholy, plaintive soul, which one hears eternally sighing and regretting through his Ballades and Nocturnes; courteous and charming in the friendly intercourse of Waltzes and Mazurkas;—heroic in the Polonaises, of which more than one is an epic and triumphant masterpiece.

This last rhythm, at least, Chopin never enervated; how, on the contrary, he affirms and en-

forces it! And from what heights and with what a plunge, beneath what tumbling avalanches of scales does he precipitate the note and the stroke! As though to drive it forward with a deeper imprint; that they, who join this national, almost sacred dance, marking more rudely the measure, may carry away on their exiled feet some of the soil of the homeland. Rubenstein's rendering of the "Eighth Polonaise," the one described as "aux octaves," was something never to be forgotten; the formidable chords to which only those giant hands seemed equal; the colossal Crescendo, the thunder-rolls, the pomp, luxury and tumult: what music ever evoked in a more sumptuous guise, a more brilliant vision of a people, marching to death or to liberty?

And yet, after all, Chopin was not one of the greatest among the great; endowed with poetry and passion, with fantasy and the promotings of a chivalrous and enthusiastic heart,—with all the gifts, in fine, which make the charm, the beauty, the glory of his country, he bore within his breast the causes, too, of that country's weakness and ruin;—unruly and diseased nerves, more of imagination than of logic, unequal moods and the taste for,—the love, even, of glitter and flame, of baubles and plumes.

The mother of Ladislas Bolski once said to

that young fool: "It is beautiful to be a hero; it is still more beautiful to have a conscience;" and the sequel of the romance proved her to be right. Self-mastery, discipline, wisdom, and an unshackled, firmly governed will, are, in art as in life, the essential forces and the sovereign virtues. And these forces and virtues Chopin did not possess.

VII.

BELLINI.

By a certain half-Italian seashore of the Mediterranean, thoughts of Bellini flooded my memory.

Lying ready to plunge into the warm blue waves, I was enjoying a foretaste of its fascinations, when through the silence there arose from the terrace of a neighbouring villa, the "O di qual sei tu vittima" from "Norma." Some workman of melodious Italy singing with light voice, whilst his hand, light as the voice, decorated a wall, with garlands of fruits and flowers,—one of those graceful, ornamental friezes common to his country. And all that his hand painted and his voice sang, the fresco and the melody seemed to accord with the softness of the



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sky and the languor of the waters, responding to the delicious sensation of well-being.

Under the spell of this seductive harmony, I was tempted to reread "Norma," "I Puritani" and "La Sonnambula," without counting a volume of some five hundred pages consecrated to the glory of the Maestro of Sicily, by one Antonino Amore,—the very euphony of whose name savours sweetly of Bellini. Alas, I should have done better, had I rested contented with the beauty of the voice and the country and the hour! Why did I exchange the fleeting but exquisite impression, for a judgment, firmer, but chagrined.

In that melodious charmer of a summer morning I have found only the representative of a period of decadence and corruption; during which, in the first half of this century, genius debased a type of high art, and abolished that image of sonorous beauty which had been the Italian ideal. These musicians emptied forms, once full and rich, of their contents,—of their very substance; they murdered the mind and soul of a divine body. What, for instance, have they made of the air,—the "aria"? Of that musical organism which the old and great masters had created so noble and so strong, and which a classic and Latin genius had founded in reason,

no less than in beauty? An insipid formula, a vain image, a sterile exercise, without truth and without life. Oh, those airs of Bellini! What words can paint the poverty of the eternal "Andante," eternally accompanied with triplets; the intervention of ridiculous syllabic choruses; the necessitated halt at the "Point d'orgue," that the prima-donna might have time to get her breath and her position, and, finally, the horror, the gross delirium of the "Stretto" which awakens within us only ignoble, lowering emotions.

And what injuries, what shameful wrongs have been suffered by melody, that most delicate of all the forms of musical beauty! Melody, who had commanded the mind, and whom the founders of the Italian opera, the spiritual masters of Florence and even of Venice, had thought to crown sovereign of the intelligence; she, who by a unique privilege, in the realm of art, called herself so beautifully, the "Idea;" she, Bellini and his confrères have made the slave of the senses, the dispenser of frivolous joys and of superficial pleasures.

And with this eternal sensualism, the Bellinian melody has united a sensibility which seldom awakens thoughts any more profound. At times, indeed, it may; let us not, for a moment, overlook the furtive grace which, now and again,

through the phrases of "La Sonnambula" insinuates itself into the sterility which was Rossini's legacy to Italy. But for one accent, one sincere sigh, what a price of false sentimentality do we pay. How many crocodile floods, for one true tear! "Piangere . . . far piangere," we find the word at every page of the Bellini correspondence; it was his programme, his ideal; and, if it is true that the young weeper instilled a new tenderness into the genius of his people, still more did he enfeeble and debilitate it. And yet one prefers his melancholy to his cheerfulness, and his heroism to his enthusiasm, his real weakness to his pretended vigour. For his vivacity was deplorable: think of the "Suona la tromba" in "I Puritani;" that most sad decadence of Italian melody. How it fails equally in touching the two extreme reaches of the soul. Here melody, capable of translating each emotion, betrays it instead: incapable of real power, as of true sweetness, now woeful and now commonplace, her rôle is shrunken to "gnian-gnian" and "boum-boum."

Is it impossible, then, to surprise in this degenerate art, a single vestige, a last faint reflection of beauty? Not impossible, doubtless, but we must content ourselves with a scantily musical beauty, or one which is musical only in the most primitive

sense. A sonorous, almost physical beauty and that is all: the beauty of sound emitted by voices which, indeed, seemed in themselves to be incomparable, for it was for these voices, and for them alone, that Bellini wrote. When he composed "*I Puritani*," and to this his correspondence bears witness, he thought, not of personalities but of "*virtuosi*," always of the throats, never of souls. And so, from his simplest songs, or from his most ornate flights, whether murmured by pure voices of nature or poured out by voices trained in agility, some beauty, doubtless, must spring and some joy; but a joy which is inferior and material, and the most elementary that music can give: a joy of the ears, often,—sometimes of the heart, but of the understanding, never. And what remains to-day of Bellini, who died at thirty-one, and of the frail genius, guest of a frail body? Fragments of phrases which were happy beginnings; scattered bits of true, often touching, intonations; a word, a name delicately written in music; and above all two women's silhouettes. Amina, under a cloud of suspicion, wishing only for death and Norma, despoiling the sacred oaks. Before the final atrocities of "*Sonnambula*," I know among its mediocre melodies a song of melancholy, which Pergolesi, the Pergolesi of "*Tre giorni son che*

Nina" need not have disowned: the first ten measures, too, of "Casta Diva," are worthy of immortality; they are perhaps the most beautiful invocation ever offered to the queen of the night;—nothing more chaste was ever sung to her, nothing more nocturnal and sweet, or which more resembled the fair moon goddess. Between the design of the melody, the sickle of the priestess and the "golden sickle in the field of stars" there lies a mystery of relation, in a common melodious curve. Here is a moment of genius; a supreme attitude, sculptured in immortal music.

For this the name of Bellini, if not his work, is worthy of life: "il est du sang d' Hector, mais il en est le reste." The palest rose of a branch, created to bear exquisite blossoms of immortality.

VIII.

FÉLICIEN DAVID.

Auber said of him, with the maliciousness of a confrère: "Wait till he descends from his camel," and, in truth, the musician of the "Le Desert" and "Lalla-Rookh" would better never have climbed down from his two-humped Pegasus.

Born under the half-Oriental sun of Provence, of a father who was a melomaniac, much given to travel, the small Félicien sang romances at the age of four, and composed them at twelve. After filling the positions, one after the other, of chorus-boy, pupil,—and a very mediocre one, of the Jesuits, second orchestral leader of the Aix theatre, which gave little else but vaudeville performances, lawyer's clerk and chapel-master, knowing very little and possessing less, at twenty, he departed for Paris in the search of art and fortune. Cherubini's reception of him must have been terrible: “*Qué vous né savez rien! Qué vous né faites qué des fautes! Qué cé nest pas di la mousique!*” He never grew to know much more and, yet, his was music. Just managing to pass the Conservatory, he lived on, for long, in obscure misery; earning just enough by giving lessons, to take them himself. Generous, as the poor usually are, he was attracted by the Saint-Simonian doctrines, and joined himself to the little church, becoming chapel-master, for the second time. The musical conducting of the new religion was confided to him, and this modern David fell to the composing of Psalms.

Occasions for music were not wanting in the community of Ménilmontant: now it was the ceremony of the dismissal of all domestics, the

brothers having resolved thenceforth to serve one another ; and again it was the “ taking the habit,” a blue cloak with white vest and wide trousers with a belt. The belt being the symbol of the apostolic voyages ; while the vest, fastening in the back, signified mutual assistance, as no brother could button it for himself. At these sacred functions, Félicien David assisted at the piano ; improvising daily, also, at meal-time and during the services, and always at the funerals.

After their dispersion, some of the faithful crossed over seas ; among the number, Félicien, a piano following in his wake. At Constantinople, on account of their costumes and general appearance they were arrested, thrown into prison and finally shipped to Smyrna. Here, during three months, our hero played on the piano upon his terrace, to the stars of the night. At Jaffa, he healed,—always by his piano, the son of a consul. At Cairo, he was the professor of the Viceroy’s wives ; indirect professor, for it was the eunuchs who took the lessons, and transmitted them to the ladies. Coming back to Paris in 1835, he found his usual poverty awaiting him, and for ten years he lived on in doleful obscurity. “ But God,” said he, “ will recognise my works in his own time,” and God’s time

was December 8th, 1844. The success of "Le Desert" was prodigious; for the first time on that day, men heard the Orient.

The very Orient, its breath and, as it were, the very respiration of its sky and earth. Félicien David is an echo; he adds nothing, composes nothing,—feels, more than knows. He was a little genius with little talent.

A circumscribed genius which lacks generality, that mark of sovereign minds; a musician of things, not of beings; of things extraordinary only and of that Orient, of which the charming Orientalist, Fromentin, himself said: "In it lies this great evil; that it is new and unknown to us, and awakens within us from the first, that sentiment, the most dangerous of all to art, and which I would gladly proscribe—curiosity." But David painted general characteristics of this alien nature and those which, singularly enough, seemed to lend themselves least to music. The most beautiful of his scenes are composed of immobility and space and silence; three elements, which one would have thought prohibited from the art of sounds and motion and perpetuity.

I remember that Gounod one day struck a single "Do" on his piano and asked me abruptly:

"What note is that?"

"Do."

He repeated the note, and as I repeated my answer, he replied, impatiently :

“ It is eternity.”

And so at the outset of “ Le Desert ” a “ Do ” means immensity : a monotonous immensity, for the note vibrates indefinitely, and a sterile immensity, for nothing evolves from this unique note, or, at best, a few chords ; germs of life, which accentuate the nothingness, into which they almost immediately fall back.

Prolonged, stretched out, as it were, this music is taciturn ; one of the charms and grandeur s of the Orient which it best translates is silence ; not a sullen silence but melancholy, rather, and transparent, through which gentle sighs are heard ;—such as that vaguely plaintive note of the “ Reverie du Soir ” ; like the breeze of the desert, when it moans softly to itself in tears, because, say the Arabs : “ it would be a prairie.”

And lastly this music is motionless ; no other is so devoid of passion and even of action. “ Lalla-Rookh,” Félicien David’s best work for the stage, is the very opposite of a theatrical composition. Everything is insensible by reason of its equality and sweetness ; this handsome, wandering poet and the daughter of the Sultans dream and languish, singing songs, often of ex-

quisite beauty ; striking attitudes in music and making graceful gestures. But they do not act and they do not live, and nothing lives about them. Before one of these strange scenes, recall some grand classic landscape,—the “*Pastoral Symphony*,” all rustling with universal life, and you cannot fail to realise that the exoticism of Félicien David is of a secondary order, both because it is too special and because it is too inanimate.

Musician of the Orient and of that peculiarly Oriental cult of St. Simonianism, David was doubly a dream-musician ; and the dream, above all, the dream of the lotus land, has its delights,—but its dangers too, which one must flee. “The Orient,” said one of Fromentin’s companions to him, “is a bed of repose on which one stretches oneself but too easily, where it is well with one ; of which one never wearies because of ever present slumber ; where one believes himself thinking, when, in fact, he sleeps.” And, like the land of which it sings, this music of Félicien David sinks too easily and too deeply into languor and repose. Let us beware, lest, as we listen, we forget, for rare and distant scenes, our work of to-day and the awaiting duty. Music knows other marches than those of the caravan, and many a great masterpiece is

tuned to the steps of heroes, and the measured funeral tread. There is an active life, a moral life,—one difficult to live and sad often; and this life it is, that we must live, and that art should represent to us.

IX.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

He never really knew music and yet he loved it;—passionately, as he knew how to love.

His love began, perhaps, as he listened, of a morning to the birds, after having spent all the night reading with his father. . . . Or he was moved by the old airs, which his Aunt Suzon hummed in her thin, sweet thread of a voice; and later at Annecy, life seemed to him “singing and gay,” passed amongst the children of the choir and the musicians. He long remembered the hymn: “Conditor alme siderum” which he heard one Sunday, before daybreak, swelling up from the cathedral; and he never forgot a certain little Motet which he had sung with Mlle. Merceret, the Femme de Chambre of “Maman.” Besides all this “Maman” herself sang, had something of a voice and played a little upon the harpsichord. Sometimes, seeing her busy about

the furnace, where she concocted her elixirs, “le petit” tried to draw her away from her drugs. “‘Ah! Upon my word,’ she would cry, ‘if you make me burn them, I will make you eat them.’ And disputing all the way, I would drag her to her harpsichord, where she would forget everything ; the extract of juniper or absinthe would calcine,—she would smear my face over with them and everything was delicious.”

Thus it is a question of music all through the first books of the “Confessions”; at every page we find a song.

Of the many trades of Jean-Jacques, that of music he ever loved the best. Strolling musician, a mixture of adventurer and troubadour; copyist, as persevering as miserable, giving, under borrowed names, concerts which ended in storms of hisses; professor of lessons, profitable only to himself,—for he taught to learn,—he finally arrived in Paris, “with a musical project.”

He submitted to the Academy of Sciences his system of notation by figures; and the Academy praised, but would have nothing to do with it and Rameau felled him to the ground, with a single blow. Then, by way of consoling himself, Rousseau became a diplomat; but, at Venice he fell back into music, became enamoured

of the Italian art, and returning to Paris, put on the stage an opera : "Muses galantes." He found therein, himself, "a gigantic elevation"; —the only critic, apparently, to be so impressed. And, finally, warm with admiration, and weeping with tenderness, over the masterpieces which the Buffonists were just introducing into France, he improvised that pale and frail copy of them which he called "Devin du village." And his success was prodigious.

This sudden glory, however, could not save from the fury of the public, the author of the "Lettre sur la musique française," and on the very scene of the musician's triumph, they burnt in effigy the critic; — the first of the persecutions, real or imaginary, which led Jean-Jacques to madness. But he bore no rancour against music; he christened the collection of his insipid romances, "Les consolations des misères de ma vie," and never ceased to compose. Now it was a line in dedication of the chapel De la Chevette, and now a military march; or again, after passing over the Pont Neuf one day, a Carillon of bells. He died in the very midst of music; for eight days before his death, the Marquis de Girardin gave him a concert under the poplars of Ermenonville, so that the last fête of this sad life was bright with music.

To know Rousseau in the light of a musician we must consider, not what he did but what he thought, in music, or, rather, what he felt ; his impressions and not his works. We cannot but recall what President de Brosses said of the “*Devin du village*”: “A little tale of village misery, pretty and agreeable when heard for the first time, and when one does not know it. But once known, nothing but a ‘*pont-neuf*.’ There is no stuff in it !”

As for the ideas, or, rather the sentiments of Rousseau, concerning music, they were passionate and contradictory. First a partisan and then an enemy of Rameau ; a weak but fanatical imitator of the Italians, before he became the enthusiastic commentator upon Gluck, he never did anything but give and take back again. He denied the existence and the very possibility of French music, and yet the “*Devin du village*,” weak though it is, is still one of the first examples of the French *opéra-comique*. He considered the Italian tongue the only one fitted to music, but certain of his reasons for this belief, rather give the advantage to the Germans. To him melody was everything, and nevertheless, at times, he feels the emptiness and nothingness of melody alone. Sometimes he is behind his own century, and again he is in advance of it ; there

was in him, something of the dotard and of the prophet.

No one can ever love more dearly than did Rousseau, that melody which returned him so little in kind ; every impulse of his being inclined,—obliged him to this love, for he was sensitive beyond everything else, sensitive rather than intelligent. “ I feel before I think ; this is the common lot of humanity, I have proved it more than any other man.” And in truth, he proved it to his very last breath. Now of all the elements of music that which touches us at the first most profoundly is melody, for it is through feeling alone that we enjoy it and the understanding need have no part or lot therein. Doubtless, too, Rousseau considered melody to be nearer to nature, and farthest from that social existence which he hated ; and he dreamed of abstracting and isolating the sonorous being, like the human, inherently good, and like it, too, ruined by association. His musical paradox was, perhaps, only a consequence or corollary of his paradox, concerning humanity.

And after all Jean-Jacques was of the people, and melody is of the people. Only melodies are really popular, and that life, new then, the sentiment and love of which Rousseau was the first to introduce into literature,—the domestic, every-

day life, the hidden, silent life of the small and humble, has its only and most natural expression in melody! “Tante Suzon” had sung only melodies.

My dear brother critics of music, let us be indulgent to the memory of this, Jean-Jacques, our predecessor. He was often mistaken; now and again he changed his point of view;—but let him among us who is without sin. . .

X.

LA FALCON.

She was called for only a few years, at best, Alice,—Rachel,—Valentine. And Valentine, Alice, Rachel and others of their kin, have stolen from her her real name and have buried it in oblivion.

The three great rôles of Falcon, those which she made most entirely her own, remain the three examples and supreme proofs, of a certain feminine type and ideal. The lyric heroine of her days did not resemble that of our own; she bore familiar names, was more alive and nearer us,—belonged to history and not to legend. A creature of flesh and blood, there was nothing vague, abstract or symbolic in her;—before

signifying and representing, she was. She was the Valentine of the " *Les Huguenots*," "the splendid brunette, courageous, venturesome, sanguine ; contemptuous of guarding her honour, as she was of her life, and passing from a Roman Catholic fanaticism to the serenity of a Protestant martydom."¹—Or this lyric heroine was the bold, intrepid little Normandy peasant of " *Robert le Diable* "; or, Rachel, who, without self-defence, pardons and dies. She was the passionate, generous, tender creature, who forgets herself and gives herself, and if this may not be called redemption, it is still devotion and sacrifice,—it is beauty and truth.

A very individual truth and beauty, but broader, nevertheless, and more general than the ideal of to-day. At one of the saddest times of her life, a prey to grief and despair, was it not in that "exquisite modulation of Alice at the foot of the cross" that George Sand sought peace; the quieting of the storm within her and the return of her hope? Listen to that beautiful monologue of Rachel: " *Il va venir* "; realising how the music exceeds, in its reach, the situation and the character; how the trouble of this child has been your trouble, and how well you know that hour of ennui, and of vague anguish; the hour of dark

¹ George Sand.

presentiments and mysterious fears. I could never enter the humble lodging of the woman, who had been Valentine, I could never find her, old and lonely by her fireside, without recalling the sigh of the real Valentine : "I am alone at home, alone with my sorrow!" Nor without seeming to hear the sigh of absolute solitude and complete abandonment.

Malibran's fate was happy, compared to that of Falcon. Malibran died of her genius ; she may, indeed, have "watched Malibran die," but for sixty long years Falcon gazed upon Falcon, dead. For five years she sang, and the rest,—for half a century—was silence. In that modest apartment on the Chaussée d'Antin, where she lived the life of a hermit, she did not weep, she endeavoured to forget herself, as she was forgotten. Austere duties filled her life, but at times and in spite of herself, in the dreams of the night hours, she would remember. She would see herself, coming from the chapel, after curfew, white and melodious in the evening light ; or again it was the love-duet of which she dreamed, or through which she lived, rather ; with an ardour of passion, with which, at her age, so she would say with a smile, she was a little bored and of which she was almost ashamed.

Day by day, she was more and more alone with

her memory ; till she was left, the last witness to her own genius and beauty ; to both of which she ever rendered sincere and simple respect. Both were so far away ! Some trace of her beauty was left, still : few wrinkles marked her brow,—one of the purest men said, ever bound by the circlet of the daughters of Israel ; the lustre of her eyes had not died out, and they justified still the homage which a stranger once offered to their youthful splendour. It was at the close of the first representation of " *La Juive* " ; as the audience watched the pale, svelte girl marching to her death, one of the spectators muttered : " She would make very thin soup." " Perhaps," replied his neighbour quickly, " but what beautiful eyes it would have ! "

And these eyes remained to the end very beautiful ; it was my fortune to see them, and, alas, full of tears.

Some ten years ago, I was studying Meyerbeer, and was filled with a desire to know his most illustrious interpreter and to hear her talk of him ; with much sweetness, but she sadly excused herself from meeting me ; fearing, so they told me, to stir her own ashes, perchance to rekindle them. The following summer, however, near Lake Geneva, I found myself the neighbour of an elderly lady, whose physiognomy and glance

struck me ; to my questions they replied : " That is Falcon," and this time she was kind enough not to avoid meeting me. One Sunday, after this, as she was coming down the steps of the church, bent and leaning heavily on my arm, she sighed : " These are not the steps of ' Les Huguenots ' ; " and this was her first allusion to the past.

Later, she permitted me to visit her, from time to time ; till, little by little, she hardened herself to looking back, as her own shadow or her spectre, caused her less fear. She would call to mind the suddenness of her glory ; and would measure, too, its brevity ; at times, she would speak of her terrible disaster, and of the forty years of solitude which had followed, in the funereal silence of her retreat. For she had closed her ear and her heart to all music ; she was not ignorant of the fact that another art and new masterpieces had been born, but absent from them, she had willed to remain a stranger to them. She never forgave the muse to whom she had given herself, and who had betrayed her.

One day, however, she summoned me ; I found her as always, suffering and oppressed, in her customary armchair, cushions and pillows at her back, for support. She wore her daintiest cap that day, I remember, and everything about her seemed to suggest the air of a fête. " I have

decided," she said, with a grave voice that trembled a little, " I have decided to hear some music once again to-day. Play for me, I beg of you, — play on till evening. But let it be nothing of the old days, nothing which belonged to me,— for that I should not have the courage. . . ."

I sat down at the piano and played, choosing "*Carmen*," with the thought that its brilliant, passionate beauty might touch her. Suddenly she sat up listening, understood and was seized with emotion; through the music, she divined and followed the drama, and in the final duet, when the diabolical theme bursts forth for the second time, raised like the poniard over the head of the gypsy-girl, she cried, " He is going to kill her!" and burst into tears. I would have ceased playing instantly, but with her two hands pressed against the beatings of a poor, sick heart, she besought me, sobbing to continue; to continue to give her a salutary and delicious pain. Forty years had not served to open an abyss between that art which she had worshipped and loved long since, and the modern art, which she had for so long held in fear! After half a century of solitude, she found herself once more, face to face, with genius, and at the first glance she recognised it.

The night fell, and at last I ceased playing;

beside her, sat her daughter-in-law in silence, whilst in a corner of the room, her grandchildren had hidden themselves, motionless, anxiously watching their grandmother's tears. She rose, finally, to go to her own room, murmuring, as she passed me, "Come back to-morrow." Adding with a smile, "If it has not killed me!"

But it did not kill her and on the morrow, and many a day, thereafter, I went to her; in gentle kindness, she called me the benefactor of her last years. Poor Falcon! Never could she forget the horror of her return, one evening, to the opera, when, having believed her voice restored, after an illness, she found that it was dead! May the memory of one day give her comfort; a day of her old age, when the genius of music once more entered her breast, and took complete and sweet possession of her.

March, 1897.

XI.

LALO.

An obscure name, suddenly,—and after long waiting, grown great. A singular and melancholy destiny, without dawn, without midday, but with an evening clothed in the brightness, and almost in the youth, of the morning.

The majority of artists may be pigeon-holed under one of two classes : the unknown or the ignored. For some thirty years, the future master of "Le Roi d'Ys" belonged, successively, to the one and the other category ; indeed it was late before he advanced, with "Namouna," to the second.

On leaving the Conservatory, Lalo entered a Quartette club, founded, in 1855, by Armingaud and Jacquard. In these Quartettes he took the viola, and here, for long, his rôle and his profits as a musician were restricted ; I mean his pecuniary profits, for, as to the other advantages, it was in this club, a veritable school, that the young "Alto" formed his taste and his talent.

The very instrument, which he had chosen, served him to this end ; introducing and restraining him, as it were, in the centre of the harmony and at the heart of the masterpieces which he studied ; an instrument of fine beauty, held ordinarily in too much neglect ; the austere interpreter of dark moods and wild sorrows, which follows, with its rumbling thunders, Orestes the parricide, or escorts the corpse of Comminge, floating down the waters, it was, perhaps, the viola which inspired the composer with something of its own vigour and masculinity.

Thirty years from these humble beginnings,

Lalo was no longer unknown, but he was still far from celebrated. His opera of "Fiesque" never could be put upon the stage : the public, indeed, applauded a Concerto for the violin, the "Symphonie espagnole," his Concerto for the "cello" and the "Rapsodie norvégienne," but "Society" still reserved its judgment. And yet, in this world of society, a magnificent voice had sung the finest of his songs : notably "l'Esclave," that most beautiful example of the "Orientales" and the "Captives,"—the plaintive melody of which, floated sweet and profound, along the deep river (*uxorius amnis*) of the incomparable voice.

And Lalo was growing old. "What did you do in the summer-time?" some one asked the little white-haired man. "I sang, and it please you!"

What he had sung was the "Le Roi d'Ys"; had proposed it indeed to the director of the Opera, but only to be told "Well, dance, now!" Or rather, "make others dance!" Then he wrote "Namouna," to which no one would listen, and from this blow, dealt him in his old age, he was near to never rising again.

But one day, one beautiful May day, the Opéra-Comique gave a performance of "Le Roi d'Ys"; and the crowd, suddenly seized with enthusiasm, broke into unexpected, loud applause; till, through all the building, it was as

though, from some old-time flask of scent, opened by chance, there had escaped and spread through the air, a perfume, wonderfully sweet and penetrating.

For the “*Le Roi d’Ys*” is a masterpiece, one of the five or six which French music can claim in these last twenty-five years. A masterpiece of twofold originality: not only free from every alien influence, but wearing a distinctive character even in its native country; at once national and individual, and along lines, to which no neighbour and no compatriot can lay claim.

A masterpiece, the dominant and most rare merit of which is brevity. An artist of the orchestra, when asked his opinion, replied: “It is excellent; we are through by eleven o’clock.” And yet it does not stop abruptly; it is not shortened, but short; and I know of no music which has more substance, or which confines, within more concise forms, more energy and grace, more of poetry and of truth. Action, characters, colour, all is concentrated here; throughout the powerful, delicate sketch, there is not one excess, no useless accessory or superfluous detail. The work has very little development and no symphony, yet suggests the very contrary of any sterility or poverty. An excessively pure, dense vein of melody pervades it, a close harmony, and a

nervous orchestration, broken with brusque chords which remind one of Beethoven ; such, for example, as those with which the latter has begun and ended the Overture to "Coriolanus." Vigour everywhere, and a promptness of thought, which proceeds less by analysis than by synthesis, almost by intuition.

The figure of Margared, the wicked sister, seems graven out of some hard precious metal, an intaglio with sharply cut lines ; but Rozenn, the gentle sister, is modelled in love. "Here," as Goethe said, "the close-shut fist is opened, by the caress of a kindly hand ;" and for the tender Rozenn the music opens its leaves beneath the sun of love ; the rhythms relax, and the melody lengthens itself in warmer folds. But throughout, the forms remain ever firm and plastic, in their outlines ; the contour, though it may be softer, is never weakened, and the stroke, though lighter, is not less sure.

And thus, after Weber in "Der Freischütz," after Berlioz in "Les Troyens" and before Massenet in "Werther" the musician of "Le Roi d'Ys" endowed with a double life, a pair of feminine souls, close of kin but totally opposed in kind. He struck off, in massive and pure gold, a two-sided medallion ; and the faces, equally beautiful, show the pictures of two women, an angry brow

and a gentle, the profiles of a fury and of an angel. M. Pailleron was right: "Best is Gentle-ness . . . And Violence;" the two aspects of life and truth.

Four years after the triumph of the "Le Roi d' Ys," Lalo died, almost seventy years of age; but so young in renown, that his death seemed premature. With the regret at his loss, was mingled mourning for his long-deferred hope.

" . . . Tout etablissement
Vient tard et dure peu!"

And, still, the success of Lalo, tardy though it was, may not be the less lasting. "It often seems to me," writes Renan, "that there lies, in the very depths of my heart, a city of Ys, where ring persistently the bells; chimes which call to holy service the faithful, who hear them never more." And in the heart of many, those bells of Ys still sound. Lalo's masterpiece is given no longer; it is buried, but not dead, and, on that day, near at hand let us hope, when its bells shall once more peal through the air, there will not be wanting faithful hearts to listen to their call.

XII.

OFFENBACH.

Men who knew him assure us that he was even more astonishing than is his music: more animated, more alive, more a prey, if such a thing were possible, to motion, dizziness and madness. To appreciate him, they say, we should have seen and heard "the monster himself"; his long, thin, fantastic figure, a mixture of Voltaire and Hoffmann, forever clasping a violoncello, to which he was apparently tied.

But the knot was unfastened one day, and the German virtuoso became the conductor of the Théâtre-Français. For five years, he enlivened the entr'acts of Racine and of Corneille with the Minuets of Haydn and Mozart; directed, too, the "Ulysse" of Ponsard and Gounod, and thus the future master of "Orphée aux Enfers" and of "La belle Hélène" came in contact with antiquity.

He composed, but they would not play his works, even at the Comédie-Française, where the exquisite song, written one day, for Fortunio was refused. So, that his works might be played, he set up a theatre for himself; it was during the Ex-



OFFENBACH.

position of 1855, in a little box on the Champs-Élysées, but lately abandoned by a prestidigitator, that the “*Bouffes-Parisiens*” first opened its doors. Not very wide, for the ministry would give its sanction, at the first, to only two actors, who were “*les Deux Aveugles*”; Camille Doucet, more obliging afterwards, conceding a third. They were obliged to stand close on the stage and in the side-wings, but the success of this music-box was immense, and the great days of the “*Théâtre de la Foire*” seemed to have returned.

With the popular favour, official indulgence expanded; a fourth actor was permitted, and soon a fifth, and the Impressario transported his growing troupe and his numerous public from the Champs-Élysées to the Passage Choiseul. Finally, full license was granted to the triumph and to the scandal of “*Orphée aux Enfers*. ” On the stage and through the hall, there were crowds now and for many a day following. The “*Chanson de Fortunio*” was encored on its first evening almost from the beginning, and had to be begun again, as the “*Marriage secret*” of Cimarosa, had once been. If by chance, the theatre was closed, it was that the performers might go to England to play before royalty, or to Étretat, for the benefit of the poor, where Offenbach was

forced to lodge his artists in the town : Eurydice with the mayor, and Pluto with the curé.

Then came quarrels with his silent partners, and he closed his theatre, resigning his directorship, that, henceforth, he might play the musician. But to play that rôle, so thought his friends, with more abounding life, grace and madness than ever. And, now, began the cycle of his masterpieces : “*La belle Hélène*,” “*Barbe Bleue*,” “*La Vie parisienne*,” “*La Grande-Duchesse*,” “*La Périchole*” and “*Les Brigands*.” For six years, and for the last time, France indulged in one long, mad peal of laughter. For the last time, for this German, who had made himself a child of France, never recovered from the pall which fell upon his adopted country. Since the war, Offenbach cannot be said to have languished,—a word wholly inapplicable to this merry Andrew of a fellow ; but he repeated himself, without ever rising to his first level. He died after the completion of his “*Contes d' Hoffmann*,” the most ambitious but not the most characteristic of his works, and his last hero was that Doctor Miracle, whom he had always so much resembled.

It is incontestably true that the originality of Meilhac and Halévy's operetta, consists in the new and pleasing combination of an unbridled buffoonery, with a sustained and delicate sensi-

bility of grace and poetry. And the music of Offenbach has largely accentuated these elements ; his buffoonery is more outrageous and his poetry more delicate.

His feeling for antiquity was of the purest. For lightness of line and Attic form, the recital of Aristeas is not inferior to that of Iopas in "Les Troyens." The most truly Greek of the two songs, of "Le Roi de Béotie" and of the shepherd in "Sapho," is not that one which we might perhaps have chosen, without due thought. And John Styx is closely akin to the Achilles of Homer. On the border of the river, from which he took his name, he, too, recalls the memories of life, glory and love, and his melancholy song with its rather grotesque end, has about it an inexpressible air of paleness and extinction, in which one feels the plaint and the regret of a spirit.

And Offenbach had, too, a keen feeling for nature and local colour, above all for the colour of his own country. Every here and there, the dainty blue flower of Germany blooms up through the Parisian "humbug"; it perfumes a certain waltz of which the Weber of "Der Freischütz" would have had no need to be ashamed, and the gay duet of "La Vie parisienne," is more than a professional song to the honour of boot and glove.

in turn ; it reminds us of Brahms in its bounding rhythm, and of Wagner, in its poetry : the scene of Hans Sach and Eva in "Die Meistersinger" has nothing in it more Teutonic than that in which the pretty glove-maker offers to the boot-maker a foot, ready for fitting and scrutiny. But best of all, in its strong perfume from across the Rhine, is the drinking-song of the "Grande-Duchesse"; that goblet which falls and breaks, the old toper who "would rather die than never to drink of another," the familiar, vaguely tender legend,—all this seems less the recital of the immortal legend, than its very miniature. Petty poetry, and yet poetry ; this is not, perhaps, the royal goblet, but it is at least, the daily cup of the King of Thule.

And lastly, Offenbach was no mocker of real sentiment. Confronted with a love scene, he became again the musician of Fortunio, and though his lovers are often comic, sometimes burlesque, in their words, they never trespass upon the dignity of the music. The "Declaration" of the "Grande-Duchesse" is sincere ; there is more than one burst of unfeigned passion in the duet of "La Belle Hélène," and the letter of "La Périchole" smiles through tears.

And yet, after all, it is buffoonery that this music most accentuates, adding sensation to idea

and fortifying the words, with all the power of which sound is capable. There is something inherently comical in the expression, by music, of ideas and facts least worthy of this expression : of an invitation to dinner, and Helen's message to Paris : "We dine at seven," or the duties of a corporation like that of "The employees of the Western Line."

Offenbach was the first to bethink himself of devoting half a Finale to the proclaiming that "His coat has split in the back," and of introducing, into a delicious chorus, the fear of not finding a cab at the gates of the Saint-Lazare station. That words and circumstances may develop from the familiar into the burlesque ; that the crowd may enter into the very atmosphere of the stage and that the "drama" may broaden out, the music breaks over all bounds and bursts into one of those capricious grandiose Finales : "Pars pour la Crète !" or the galop of "Orphée aux Enfers," in which gaiety goes farther than insolence, to the very doors of insult, and of sacrilege.

But the musician not only pointed the finger at all which his poet had held up to mockery : antiquity ("Orphée" and "La Belle Hélène") ; politics and war ("La Grande-Duchesse") ; the legends of the middle ages ("Barbe Bleue"),

but his music turned into derision, music itself, and that by the most musical, even the most classical of means. The genius of Offenbach was at its best in rhythm and melody, and classic art was peculiarly constituted upon these two elements. A parodied rhythm of Beethoven,—in the Finale of the “Symphony in A,” gave birth to those couplets of “*La Grande-Duchesse*”: “Ah! que j'aime les militaires, j'aime!” “*Bu qui s'avance*” owes its beauty to rhythm rather than to prosody, and it is rhythm, which makes of “*Pars pour la Crète*”, a throbbing, persecuting command, one of the strongest expressions in music, of imperative, absolute duty.

Offenbach's inexhaustible melody was often trivial, vulgar even, but always brilliant; never banal and sometimes exquisite. He employed only classic modulations and cadences but he knew many a turn and cross-cut to avoid wearying the crowd. And, especially, did he excell in drawing a secondary motive from a first idea, one proceeding out of the latter and, often, not less happy. With the gift of invention, he possessed, too, that of melodic deduction and of multiple development. Rossini sent him his portrait with the following written upon it: “To Jacques Offenbach,—the Mozart of the Champs-Élysées,” and this dedication was only half in jest.

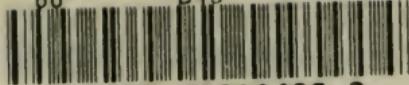
Offenbach resembled the Mozart whom he adored, though at a distance and from below, as it were : "Barbe Bleue" is his "Don Juan"; Fortunio, Cherubino; and the love duet of the "Magic Flute" might be adapted, as it stands, to the letter of "La Périchole." In this rhythm and these familiar harmonies, the melody of genius is hidden ; there is no parody nor caricature here. Rather, a mysterious meeting with the highest ; a condescension, perhaps, but not a degradation of the ideal.

This affinity disconcerts and vaguely troubles us,—and herein lies, perhaps, the supreme irony of this music and its profoundest lesson ;—that, between Offenbach and Mozart, between pretty melodies and sublime songs, there should stretch a distance so wide,—and yet so narrow.

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